This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

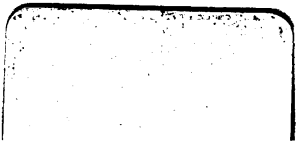
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



[illegible]
2016 So. Warner
st.

9

NAS
Griswold, L.

THE WINDS OF DEAL

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO
DALLAS • ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

THE WINDS OF DEAL

A SCHOOL STORY

BY

LATTA GRISWOLD

AUTHOR OF "DEERING OF DEAL," "DEERING AT PRINCETON," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

GEORGE HARPER

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1914

All rights reserved

AFE

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
204065B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1912 L

COPYRIGHT, 1914
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1914

IN HONOREM

L. A.

HAEC DE EO

QUI ILLUM AMAVISSET

C.U. TRANSFER DEC 26 1941

FOREWORD

For the sake of uniformity with a former story of Deal School, and at the expense of it with a previous college story in which some of the same characters appear, the author continues to use the somewhat obvious pseudonym of Kingsbridge College for Princeton University. The topography of Deal, though professedly not in New England, is identical with that of the school with which the author is connected; otherwise the constitution and structure of Deal is entirely imaginary, as, indeed, are all of the characters.

St. George's School, Newport:
21 April, 1914.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INDIAN SUMMER	1
II.	THE KAPPA UPSILON	12
III.	A CONFESSION	27
IV.	MACGREGOR STATES A PROBLEM	37
V.	SUNDAY NIGHT	48
VI.	GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, AND FRIEND	64
VII.	LIQUIDATION OF LIABILITIES	83
VIII.	WHETSTONE	96
IX.	EASTER TERM	114
X.	TRIED OUT	131
XI.	TERM END	148
XII.	THE RETREAT FROM RUSSIA	166
XIII.	LAURA	186
XIV.	MACGREGOR SOLVES A PROBLEM	204
XV.	A FRIEND IN NEED	225
XVI.	A CRISIS	241
XVII.	THE BREAK	258
XVIII.	THE FLIGHT	287
XIX.	THE LAST TERM	307

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"Within the cove the shadows were deep" . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"Heaven save President Forester" 17

"Close bounds for active boys were effective punishment" 88

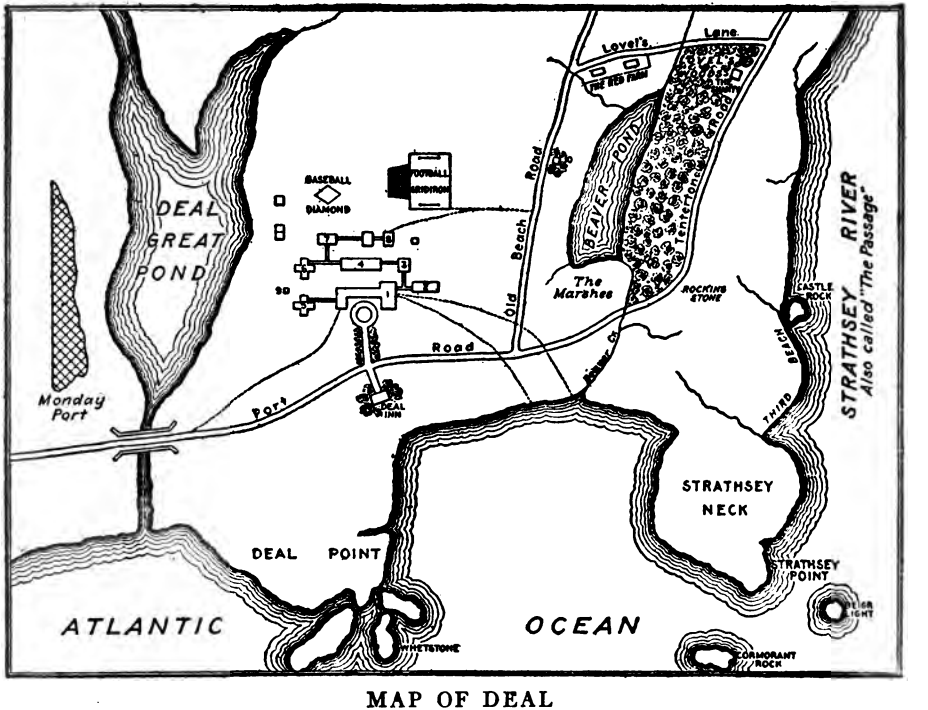
"Early the next morning George took Laura for a long walk" 199

"As Erroll entered, the conversation suddenly ceased". 270

"The brightest and best part of it all to Erroll was the deepening of his friendship with Ned Pembroke" . 310

"Vexed by the windy heart and wild,
Youth hurts you and must hurt you. Yet
Hold to your dreams! Nor once forget
They shall be utter Youth for you
When others' dancing-days are through.
Hold to your dreams!"

THE WINDS OF DEAL



MAP OF DEAL

(Drawn by E. R. Perry)

1. Old School
2. Refectory
3. Gymnasium
4. School House
5. Chapel
6. Standerland House
7. Montrose House
8. Howard House
9. Rectory
10. Pie House

THE WINDS OF DEAL

CHAPTER I

INDIAN SUMMER

THE September after his graduation from Kingsbridge College Anthony Deering returned to Deal School as an assistant master. Deal had been the native heath of his boyhood. "The heart's at home here," the expression of Reggie Carroll, whom he had known so well both at school and college, recurred to him over and over again that long vacation as the one he himself could have chosen to express what he felt about the school. One of the good things about this schoolmastering experiment was that Morris would be there still, to be known now on easier, more intimate terms than ever.

It was good of Morris, Deering felt, to have come into Monday Port to meet him that bright warm September afternoon of his return; to have explained things a bit as to school routine wherein the old boy was rusty; to have dropped hints as to teaching and discipline that a new master would value. And then the first evening after supper, the day before the boys returned, they sat together on the east-

ern terrace that overlooks the sea and the great fan-shaped curves of Strathsey Neck past Cormorant to the Light of Deigr, faithfully blinking red and white across the waters as in days of yore. A rosy flush was fading on the deep blue of the bay, the stars were growing thick in the cloudless sky as the twilight deepened, and the lights of Little Tenterton along the opposite shore of the Passage gleamed their messages—friendly welcoming messages, it seemed to Deering, who was unaffectedly glad to be just where he was and under just his conditions.

Morris was puffing contently at his pipe, murmuring a reply now and then to his companion's frequent comments. He had looked forward for a long time to this day of Deering's coming back. It seemed too exactly what he had hoped for to be true; for a schoolmaster's rich experience of separations teaches him the value of friendship. Since Anthony Deering had stood before him, a slim eager-eyed lad, eight years since and asked for a seat in the schoolroom, Morris had been conscious of a quite indefinable attraction in him. And then he had known him and cared for him in the years that followed. This was an Indian summer promised for their friendship, and Indian summers had so seldom come!

"Well," said Morris simply, "it is good to have you back. But you know I feel that more than I can tell it you."

"Of course," said Deering irrelevantly, "I know I shall be awfully green about the business; but it

meant so much to me while I was here, I love it all so well and believe in it so deeply, I feel I can't but make my way—way enough at least for the Head not to kick me out before the year's over."

"Ah! the Head is as gentle as he is just," Morris replied. "You can hardly know as I how gentle or how just."

"Oh! but don't I?" exclaimed Deering. "The time that Reggie fessed up that it was he and not I who had been gambling in the shanty; and the time I had to leave and thought I wasn't coming back; and the time he couldn't make me Head Prefect——"

"And the time, and the time, and the time," put in Morris; "it is like the Book of Daniel, 'times and times'; it is every time one gets in too deep. He is so wonderfully there to pull one out."

"Do you suppose he realizes?" was Deering's lucid question.

"No; and that is the marvel of it, perhaps the secret. It is just that he is all that. One can't aim at being like that except in a general sort of way; one simply is, or, alas! simply isn't."

"I suppose so," assented Deering. "But it makes me feel a duffer. I am so chuck full of aims and intentions and good resolutions that I am almost afraid of myself."

Morris smiled. "If you can only keep chuck full after a term—a year—ten years—of it."

"And you, magister, you've been here ten—fifteen—years?"

"Nearly. But it hasn't been all smooth sailing."

"Fifteen years," said Deering; "it seems a lifetime. You here, doing the same old things, being the same, since I was a little shaver knee-high to a grasshopper. I can't realize it."

But soon, with youth's quick reversion to its own interests, Deering was discussing his plans, his hopes, his ideas of doing this, that, and the other thing with the boys that had never been done before. "And as for the kids that will be running over us to-morrow," he said, "I am crazy to see 'em; I wish they'd swarm now, this minute."

On the morrow the kids began to swarm, over everything, it seemed, and all day long. They began arriving in the morning and kept on arriving until the late afternoon. The great playing fields, the quadrangles, the halls echoed with their voices and their pattering footsteps. The dreamy peace of summer that rests over Deal in the Long Vacation gave place to an intense and varied activity; or, as it seemed to masters who had tasted of the other for a week or so, to noise, confusion and distraction.

Once that day Deering forgot that he was no longer a boy himself, when he had come suddenly upon Mr. Royston, "Gumshoe Ebenezer," pencil and school-list in hand and an expression of patient suffering upon his face, standing at the door of the Old School, noting relentlessly the precise degree of tardiness of late arrivals. An ingenuous excuse

was on the tip of his tongue when Mr. Roylston's sharp high voice rasped him back to reality. "Mr. Deering, will you be good enough to report to the Head that every boy is accounted for?"

"Certainly, sir." And Deering trotted off obediently very much as he would have done six or seven years before.

Then had come the first bewildering supper with his table of Second Formers, all quite keen about the new master, with whose exploits on the gridiron they were familiar. Despite his resolutions, Deering found himself saying "Don't" at least a score of times that meal.

After supper they poured from the refectory through the cloister into the warm rosy sunset, across the campus, into the cool sweet gloom of the Chapel, where the only lights were those that glowed, little bright beautiful bits of flame, from the candles on the altar, and where were sighing through the high aisles plaintive organ chords of Palestrina. At the head of the chancel steps stood the tall spare form of the Head clad in a white surplice. He was waiting until the last boy was in, until the last rustle faded into silence.

Deering could vividly remember other opening services. No change had taken place, no note was lacking. Down there in the stalls that fluffy golden-haired cherub might have been the Kit Wilson of his own school days; that black-eyed boy next him, looking with eager interest at the Doctor, could have been Jimmie Lawrence. . . . Dear old Jim! and

Kit and Reggie . . . dear all the old boys! . . . It was good that such places as Deal School should be; good that he was there once more, even though those others were not, though he and they were linked now only by keen clear memories, by that good man's prayers. "For all those who have gone out from amongst us, We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord." Down there among those faces seen through the soft candle light there were Jimmies and Kits and Reggies and Flash Inneses to be known and loved. . . .

Deering threw himself into the life and work of the school whole-heartedly. He assisted Mr. Gray in mathematics, fitting in where he was needed, and relieved Stenton of a good deal of the football coaching. He enjoyed this keenly, not only because he knew and loved the game, but because it threw him into constant and intimate contact with the boys. He roomed in Standerland, with a hallway of Fourth Formers to look out for, and Morris, the house master, for fellowship.

The first weeks of term were bright, clear and unseasonably cold. Then had come a storm, dreary enough the three days it lasted, and at last toward the end of October, when the school was in full swing, and football was at its height, they passed into Indian summer, so warm, so fragrant of the late honeysuckle that clambered over stone walls and trellises, with such golden haze upon the fields and upon the sea, such rich deep glories in the

marshes and the woods, that it was good to be alive in it. Lessons, boys, football, the trite amiabilities or the occasional acerbities of the masters' common-room; the long walks over the beaches or into the crimson-flushed tangles of Lovel's Woods; the long soft nights with windows open to the lights of Monday across Deal Water, the long long talks with Morris, all made Deering, caught as he was with the wonder of his new life, the life of boyhood and school days renewed, think sometimes that it really could not have been he for whom the lights had gone out so wholly that last June night at Kingsbridge.

His were characteristics to make him quickly popular with many boys, popular too in a way that did not diminish from a fairly effective discipline. As is inevitable with a positive and lively personality, though he determined to avoid showing favoritism, he found some boys more responsive than others, whom naturally he came to know better than the rest. The response of a certain group of Fourth Formers, several of whom roomed in his own house, was quick and enthusiastic. In their imaginations he had been apotheosized on famous football fields and was now but deigning to traverse the glimpses of the moon once more, a bright, beneficent and transient presence.

One day, a few weeks after term opened, Deering felt for the first time an emotion that in school days he had supposed masters frequently and luxuriously indulged—quick, blazing, unconcealable wrath.

Donald Grafton, a hot-tempered, though nor-

mally a good-natured and easy-going, boy, was detected in a bit of outrageous bluffing in the class in Fourth Geometry. Flecked by the sting of Deering's outspoken disgust, he made himself the more objectionable by assuming an air of outraged dignity and retorting with an impertinence.

Deering pronounced an incisive punishment that was to enable Grafton to measure the length and depth of his bad judgment for a week to come. "You will stay on bounds, Grafton, until further notice; and report to me or to the master of the day every fifteen minutes in the afternoon."

Donald lowered his black brows and shot a glance of malice at the white-faced master. Fortunately at the instant the bell rang and Deering dismissed the class. The score of boys poured into the corridor and crowded about Grafton, who had backed against a wall prepared to give his opinion of Deering to any that chose to listen.

"The beast! Fancy calling off practice every quarter of an hour to run to that little whipper-snapper with a 'Here I am, sir,' and a 'Please may I report, sir!' I'll be hanged——"

"Graf, you're a jackass! You've bluffed the wrong man and your bluff has been called, and you're too sore to admit it." Tom Watson, a big strapping youth, with yellow hair and smiling light blue eyes, emerged from the crowd and wound his great arm around Grafton's neck, half choking him in the process.

"Get off, will you!" Donald howled. "How the

deuce do you suppose we are going to find out whether he's a cinch or not, if somebody doesn't try to bluff him?"

"Take it from me," replied Watson, "that he's not. Come on," he added, pulling Grafton through the door out into the quadrangle, "the Sixth will be jumping on us for raising a row in the corridors."

Grafton was for resisting, but suddenly a bright-faced, red-headed, clever-looking little fellow, of their form and age but scarcely half their size, had pushed his way through the crowd and jumped between them. "Cut this out!" he cried in tones of command; and they, accustomed to obey that authoritative voice of their undisputed leader, good-naturedly made way for him.

"For goodness' sake," continued Macgregor Meath, who was wit and philosopher to his friends, "don't let us have a family row with the whole form looking on." He had adopted now a tone of mock pathos. "Tom only wanted you to realize your beastly mistake, Graf. Let him alone, Watson, do! Mr. Deering is dead white, and it's a rotten shame to spoil him. Let's keep him—one of 'em, for once—in all his native niceness."

Grafton, from whose pleasant countenance all traces of his recent annoyance were fading under the influence of this half-bantering, altogether-strategic appeal, turned to Meath with a somewhat foolish laugh. "You're such an ass, Mac!"

"Thanks, old sport," rejoined Meath, "it's awfully decent to include me in your own class. Jok-

ing aside, you will kindly drop your attempts to give Mr. Deering a bluff; largely because it is useless, largerly, if I may so speak, because we mean to adopt him."

"Oh, we do!" sneered Grafton.

"Yes; make him an honorary member of the Kappa Upsilon, secretly, in camera, as it were; in the manner the Pope makes cardinals now and again, in petto, in pectore."

Grafton looked bewildered.

"I forgot," continued Meath, who came of an ardent Catholic family, "that you are a heretic and consequently don't know much about the Pope. Every now and then, little one, the Pope holds what is called a consistory at which he nominates a lot of cardinals,—princes of the Church, you know, the ne plus ultra of ecclesiastic; only sometimes he doesn't announce the names of one or more of 'em; keeps 'em secret, in his breast, in petto, in pectore (third declension, ablative singular, neuter) till he's just good and ready to make 'em public. See? Well, in my capacity of Quadrangle of the Kappa Upsilon Society I've decided to hold a consistory of the blessed fraternity and name Mr. Deering a member in petto." He turned to the three or four boys who had ventured to remain near enough to overhear this conversation. "Shall it not be so, my brothers?"

They laughed good-natured approval. Donald, still bewildered, was constrained to murmur an

assent, as Meath had suspended conversation for that obvious purpose.

"I suppose you'll do it whether I approve or not," he said.

Macgregor flashed a quick amused glance at him as he gave the signal to disperse. "To-night, then, directly after lights in Tom's room." And putting his arm through Watson's, he pushed across the quadrangle toward the Schoolhouse, leaving Grafton to retire with such of his formmates as he would and in what dignity he might.

CHAPTER II

THE KAPPA UPSILON

THE Fourth Form at Deal, much to their annoyance, were required to prepare their lessons for the next day in the schoolroom under the eye of a master the night before. Their bedtime was ten o'clock and the half-hour before that was assumed by the authorities to provide them with ample opportunity for relaxation and gossip at the end of an active day. It was a half-hour, however, that rarely sufficed such adventurous spirits as those of whom Macgregor Meath was the leader.

Had Meath a message that would occupy scarce a minute in the telling, instead of going at once on his errand he would loiter in any room that happened to attract his notice, gossip aimlessly with any one that came his way, and find himself at last with but two or three minutes in which to undress, brush his teeth, say his prayers, put out his lights and get to bed, before the fatal bell would ring. When all had been silent for a while, he would slip out, stealthily make his way by shadows in the corridors, porches, eaves, to the room of the boy he wished to see, and the process of delivering his message would consume an hour or more. Sometimes

his host would succumb to weariness—for Macgregor, like other garrulous persons, occasionally was dull; and in such case, if the coast were clear, he would return to his room as he had come; if it were not, he would curl up in a blanket and sleep comfortably on floor or windowseat till the dawn stole in and woke him. Now and again vigilant masters, suspecting his nocturnal prowls, would lay traps and catch him and he would suffer severe penalties for a few weeks or so; but on the whole such mishaps did not occur frequently enough to disturb his sense of security, much less to break his habits.

It was in Meath's fertile brain that the idea of the Kappa Upsilon had originated the year before. Doctor Forester, for wise reasons, forbade secret societies or social clubs, and efforts to establish them had heretofore been sporadic and unsuccessful. It was due to this prohibition that Macgregor was inspired to fix his fame by founding one. He was an omnivorous reader and during his browsings in the library one day he had come across an old book that gave an account of the ancient and mysterious order of the Rosicrucians, which instantly appealed to his Celtic mind and Catholic training, if not as a model, at least by way of suggestion. Meath had a keen sense of the dramatic and he cherished the idea of some day becoming a diplomat. Secrecy added a piquancy to life that satisfied some craving of his precocious soul.

But withal he was practical and not without

understanding of the human nature with which he had to deal. Like most boys he was fond of eating, and he was aware that food was a magic lever with which to work on his companions. Unfortunately the possessor of a too-ample allowance, the stores of the pie-house were at his command; his secret larders were always well supplied; his caves in Lovel's Woods were renowned for the quality and quantity of viands served his honored guests; his midnight feasts were the delight of his friends and the envy of his acquaintance. As for the school refectory, Macgregor scorned its menus; at table he was abstemious to a degree. His delight was to eat delicately and at unconventional hours.

The Kappa Upsilon sprang into existence dedicated to this art. From his First Form year, by dint of will, wit and cleverness, Macgregor had been the leader of a little group of his formmates, so that he had no difficulty in enrolling in his secret society his closest and most faithful satellites. These were Ned Pembroke, Donald Grafton, Douglas Ware, Tom Watson, and Paul Peter Teal, familiarly called Polly. The little group was opprobriously known to the form as the Insufferable Six, though in reality they were popular boys and, save for the tie of the Kappa Upsilon which bound them in a peculiar intimacy, democratic in their friendships and loyal to their form. The epithet was for the most part good-naturedly bestowed.

One of the by-laws of the Kappa Upsilon required that all meetings should be held after lights, which

was not strange considering the composition of the society and the character of its leader. Watson and Ware, because they roomed in Montrose House under the not-too-effective guardianship of Little Beverly, were usually the hosts on such occasions.

On the evening of the fracas in Deering's Geometry class Macgregor Meath emerged from Snuffer Jennings's room at the end of the hall at precisely nine twenty-nine. An impatient prefect was waiting at the door of Mr. Morris's room, anxious to be at his books but delayed by Meath's tardiness. A fine wrath bespread his usually amiable countenance.

"I might have known," he exclaimed, as he recognized the delinquent, "that it would be one of the Insufferable Six! Why don't you," he asked pathetically, "occasionally try to get to bed on time, Meath? You know it's a beastly screw for prefects to be giving late marks."

Macgregor paused politely. "No; can't say I've observed the prefects display much reluctance in that particular."

"There'll be blamed little reluctance on my part," snapped Baxter. "I'll give you a dozen for good measure. This is the third night running."

"Awfully sorry to have bothered you, Baxter," said Meath sweetly. "Do you realize that for about ten minutes' lateness you will deprive me of a whole half-holiday? Is Bill out?"

"Of course he's out," replied the prefect, "or I

shouldn't be in charge. Hurry on, will you? I have a lot of work to do."

"Sure thing, Bax," replied Meath in suave and gentle tones. "I'll have my lights out in a jiffy. Don't bother to wait for me." He disappeared within his room.

"Really, this is too easy," he murmured, as he removed his shoes and let them fall to the floor with a thud. He knocked about for a few minutes, and then, after listening cautiously for a while at his door, switched off his lights, raised his window, and slipped out upon the fire-escape.

It was a moonlight night, but this side of Standerland was in shadow. Macgregor paused a moment to put on his shoes, then slid down the fire-escape and dropped softly to the ground eight feet below. He ran along the wall of the cloister which connected the two houses, keeping well within the shadows, till he came to a similar fire-escape on the north side of Montrose. Arrived there, he gave a low peculiar whistle. Almost instantly a window was raised in the second story and the end of a stout rope came dangling down. Macgregor grabbed it, and in an instant or so had shinned up till his little left arm could grasp the lower rung of the ladder. An effort or so more and he was up. In another second he was in Watson's bedroom.

"All serene," he whispered, vaulting over the window-sill, as he took from his pocket a small electric light and flashed it into the faces of the boys

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

"Heaven save President Forester"

already gathered there. "One, two, three, four—where's Pem?" he asked sharply.

"He'll be here," whispered Tom Watson; "told me so last thing in the schoolroom. Didn't you see him before you started?"

"No; I was busy discussing the European situation with Snuffer Jennings. Shish! there he is. Slip out the rope of sand."

Ware raised the window again and sent forth the end of the rope. In a moment or so a sixth dark figure clambered over the window-sill and joined them.

"Halt—the countersign!" demanded Meath in a sepulchral whisper.

"Heaven save President Forester."

"Welcome, Brother Pembroke." Then Meath turned swiftly. "Quick now! get the spreads over the windows, lock the doors, and ram the keyholes with cotton."

The five sprang to their appointed tasks, while Macgregor waited in the middle of the little bedroom, from which the dim moonlight was being shut out, mutely approving their dispatch and thoroughness. When all was ready, he switched on the electric lights, and with a sigh of relief sank into the single chair the room afforded. Four of the others crowded upon the bed; while Watson, being the largest, was obliged to content himself with the edge of the washstand. From beneath his coat Meath produced six bars of sweet chocolate and proceeded to distribute them to his companions.

"Come to order, brethren. Will some one make a motion that the reading of the minutes of the last meeting be omitted?"

Ware raised his hand.

"Tumbler Ware," said Meath, condescending to recognize him.

"Mr. Quadrangle, I move that the reading of the minutes be omitted."

"I second the motion," exclaimed Polly Teal, a light-haired, fair-skinned youth, whose expression changed in the course of a minute from one of great good nature to one of ferocious irritation or of profound grief.

"Address the chair, Jester Teal," exclaimed the Quadrangle with disgust. "Mr. Triangle, fine the Jester one cent for making a faux pas."

"I forgot——" began Polly.

"One cent!" was the inexorable sentence. "Now repeat your motion, Mr. Jester."

"*Mr.* Quadrangle, I second the motion."

"All those in favor will say Aye," chanted Meath, as he swept his hand with a broad horizontal motion across his brows.

"Aye," five throats whispered hoarsely.

"Opposed, No."

Profound silence reigned.

"The Ayes seem to have it; the Ayes have it. The minutes will be omitted. It is the opinion of the Quadrangle that the Triangle's report on the state of the treasury should be read. Any objec-

tion? I hear none. The Triangle will please read his report."

Pembroke, a dark-haired, dark-eyed, handsome boy; tall, slim, well built; having fumbled in his pocket for a slip of paper, found it at last and proceeded to read. "There is in the treasury at present one dollar and forty-nine cents, being the balance left over after the bills for the last feast were paid. The unpaid fines amount to three dollars and two cents, two dollars and ninety-nine cents of that amount being owed by the Jester. Total, four dollars and fifty-one cents."

"Hm," commented Meath; "the Triangle's report is to be deplored, but unless I hear any objection it will be accepted. Any jokes?"

Again there was silence.

"No jokes?" exclaimed Macgregor with an air of surprise.

"What the deuce did you call this meeting for?" exclaimed Teal, his white face flushing scarlet.

Macgregor withered him with a glance. "Mr. Triangle, fine the Jester five cents for unnecessary display of temper."

Polly's deep blue eyes filled with tears. "Hang it, Mac, I won't be fined! That's over three dollars since term began."

"Mr. Triangle," continued the despotic Macgregor, "fine the Jester five cents more for wasting time with futile protests."

Teal gulped, then dashed his hand across his eyes. Instantly he was smiling.

"Ah! the sun emerges from the cloud," said Meath. "No jokes? Then will the Triangle kindly take the chair?"

He rose and yielded his place to Pembroke, who seated himself gravely and rapped for order.

"Any jokes?" asked Pem in a deep whisper.

"Mr. Triangle," said Meath, "I have a most important joke to offer for the consideration of the brethren. I have the honor to propose a new member for our brotherhood,—Mr. Anthony Deering, Bachelor of Arts of Kingsbridge College, at present a master in this noble seat of learning. Heaven save President Forester!"

The five sprang to their feet and all six bowed ceremoniously in the direction of the Rectory. Then they faced Meath again, amazement on their faces.

"Mr. Quadrangle," said Pembroke at length, "the proposal of a master for membership in our brotherhood is, to say the least, unusual. I hope you will be willing to give the brethren your reasons for this unprecedented joke."

"Certainly," replied Meath; "it was for that purpose that I called the meeting. The idea occurred to me this morning in Fourth Geometry, during the scene our beloved brother Tumbler Grafton succeeded so asininely—may I say?—in making."

"O by Jove, Mac," exclaimed Grafton; "I won't stand——"

"Order!" cried Pembroke; "the Quadrangle has the floor."

"As I was saying," continued Meath blandly, casting an amused glance at the extinguished Grafton, "when I was so rudely interrupted, the idea occurred to me during the afore-mentioned scene. It will be a wise move for a multitude of reasons should the Kappa Upsilon adopt Mr. Deering. He is, as you all know, a popular old boy; he has distinguished himself in football and in a variety of other ways at the only college worthy of the name——"

"Say! I'll be hanged——" exclaimed Grafton, who was preparing for Harvard.

"No—you'll be fined," rejoined Meath with a faint smile. "Kindly stuff a towel down his throat, Wat, and let me get through, will you?"

Watson good-naturedly proceeded to execute this request, and Grafton somewhat tamely submitted.

Meath continued. "Mr. Deering's record speaks for itself; and it has been obvious to all of us, except our beloved brother for the moment happily gagged, that he is a good deal of what we most value in those charged with our education. After a long experience of Gumshoe Ebenezer, Pussy Gray, the inestimable Little Beverly et al., he deserves a warm welcome and a God-speed in the way he has elected to pursue. What more fitting, what mark of confidence more appropriate, than to make him one of ourselves?"

"Mr. Triangle," exclaimed Douglas Ware, who had jumped to his feet as Meath concluded. He was a large, somewhat ungainly youth, with black hair and curious light gray eyes.

"Tumbler Ware."

"Mr. Triangle, aren't we wasting time? Isn't it obvious that Mr. Deering, being a master in the school—Heaven save President Forester!" He paused, while all rose and bowed gravely in the direction of the Doctor's residence. "Isn't it evident that Mr. Deering is not in a position to accept the honor?"

Pembroke looked inquiringly at Meath.

"Mr. Triangle," explained the voluble Macgregor, "I have anticipated this objection. My suggestion is that we elect Mr. Deering as the Pope sometimes names cardinals, in petto, in pectore (third declension, ablative singular, neuter). I should propose that we do not inform him of the distinction until we feel confident that he will accept it."

"There is no doubt that the joke is most unusual," was Pembroke's comment, "but it certainly has alluring possibilities. Any repartee?"

"Mr. Triangle!" Grafton was on his feet, having wrenched himself free from Watson's encircling arms. "I protest that the constitution would be violated if this joke should be accepted."

"What's a constitution when it conflicts with the sovereign will of a people?" cried Macgregor, rising in righteous indignation,—the manner that

made him so impressive a debater in the Civics Club. "I submit that nothing is necessary but for us to record our votes. I take it from the expression on your faces that you agree with me that the stupendous possibilities opened by my happy proposal are not to be jeopardized by such paltry considerations as the constitution. Besides, does not the constitution exist merely as the expression of our will,—I mighty more truly say, of our pleasure? And is it not our pleasure to enroll Mr. Deering, albeit for a time secretly, as a member of the Kappa Upsilon? I move the question."

As was frequently the case, Meath's spell-binding eloquence had its effect. Forgetful of the importance of quiet, they clamored for the privilege of adopting his proposal, drowning out Grafton's futile protests.

Meath reassumed the chair and put the question: "All those in favor of Mr. Deering being admitted a member of this society in petto will say Aye."

"Aye," came the emphatic chorus.

"Opposed, No."

"No!" roared Grafton.

At the instant there came a tremendous knocking on the outer door of the study. With the instinct of habit and self-preservation Watson and Ware jumped as if they were shot, pulled down the blanket from the window, switched off the lights, and proceeded at lightning pace to strip off their clothing which had been worn over pyjamas. The other four had almost instantaneously disappeared

out of the window. Meath was the last to go, and, as he was drawing his little body over the sill, he turned back to whisper to Watson, now in bed, and to Ware, who was stumbling through the study to open the door, "The Ayes have it; Mr. Deering is elected. And now the Quadrangle is in motion. Good-night!"

Mr. Beverly made his way through the study into the bedroom, followed by Ware sleepily rubbing his eyes and stifling an enormous yawn. When the lights were turned on, Watson was discovered in bed apparently fast asleep.

Little Beverly looked about, not yet condescending to explain the motive of his raid.

"Yes, sir; what is it you want, sir?" asked Douglas meekly.

The master made no reply, but walked over to the bed and gazed down for a moment with a sarcastic leer upon his face at the seemingy unconscious Watson. "How sweetly he sleeps!" he murmured. Then he looked under the bed, felt about in the closet, and opened the cubby-hole in the lower part of the washstand. He thrust his head out of the window and looked long upon the deserted campus.

"There's no one here, sir," said Ware at last; "did you think there was?"

Beverly turned sharply from the window. "You made racket enough for a dozen."

"Really, sir."

"Come, come, Ware; don't try to deceive me. What have you been doing?"

"I, sir? Really, sir——"

"Don't 'sir' me so. Who has been in here?"

"Mr. Beverly," said Douglas, with an air of dignified withdrawal into his shell, "do you think it would be fair in me to tell you, even if anyone had been in here? Watson and I were talking rather loudly some time ago; but he seems to be asleep, sir."

"Yes, *seems!*" exclaimed Little Beverly bitterly, biting his lips. "What crude excuses you can invent, Ware!"

"I, sir? I haven't invented any excuses."

"No? Go to bed now, and I will sift this business in the morning. You and that sleeping beauty yonder can rest assured, however, of the full dose of late marks."

"Thank you, sir," said Ware gently.

"You need not lock the door again," admonished Beverly. He looked about once more, then switched off the light, and with a muttered good-night left the room.

"Has he gone?" asked Tom from the bedclothes.

"Of course he's gone," Doug answered. "Poor Little Beverly!" he added, "he always makes the mistake of asking what he knows isn't a fair question, and then he is too mortified to undertake a real investigation. He's naturally a sneaky instinct, but it's partially corrected by an over-developed conscience."

He turned to enter his own bedroom on the farther side of the study, but paused to make a final

remark. "What do you think of our taking Deering this way into the Kappa Upsilon?"

"Oh!" Tom answered, "it's Mac's idea. Won't amount to much, I guess."

"Odd fish, Mac!" murmured Ware.

"Yeh—quite."

"Good-night, old top."

"Night." . . . .

CHAPTER III

A CONFESSION

WHATEVER might have been the effect of the bestowal of these honors upon the boys themselves, Deering remained unconscious of any change in their relation to him. Pembroke and Meath, who had rooms on his hallway, were already in the habit of frequently dropping into his study for a chat before lights and of coming on Saturday and Sunday evenings when he gave a general invitation to Fourth Formers, with whom as house master he was chiefly concerned. It was natural that they should bring their friends occasionally from other houses, and so sooner or later all of the Insufferable Six found their way to his rooms.

Without being definitely attracted by Meath, Deering found his precocious conversation somewhat amusing, while Macgregor, for his part, despite the life of irregularity to which he consecrated his energies, was fond of the society of persons of more mature intelligence and wider information than his own. Morris frankly disliked the boy; and, though he strove studiously to avoid giving any indication of this, Meath was clever enough to detect it and seldom visited the older master.

As for Pembroke, Deering liked him particularly: he was simple, unaffected, whole-souled, a keen football player, and a fair worker. He had none of Macgregor's genius, and sometimes Deering wondered what it was that made the two such close companions. With the exception of Polly Teal, Macgregor—it may be said—not only did not cultivate but could not endure the companionship of boys who were in any respect like himself. Grafton for a while held aloof from Deering. The memory of the Fourth Geometry episode and its subsequent punishment made him sore and grumpy for several weeks; but he was too accustomed to follow the line taken by his friends for his animosity to withstand Deering's genial attitude, even through the first term.

Among the Fourth Form boys who roomed in Standerland was a youth named George Erroll. He was a slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed, attractive boy, who was comparatively little known in his form and completely ignored by the Insufferable Six. He played no games, but he followed all sports with evident interest. He studied little, read much, and hung about, unrecognized and unacknowledged, among the rollicking kind of boys of whom Meath, Grafton and their friends were typical. Doubtless, if he had given expression to his desires, he would have confessed himself willing to forego half his life to have been included in that popular coterie. He had a sensitive mobile face, and his dark brown eyes now flashed a curious wistful glance of

appeal, now a bright, intelligent, impersonal interest. But he spoke so little, his presence was so unobtrusive, even among boys with whom he constantly associated by dint of their good-natured tolerance, that few knew him. On Saturday and Sunday nights he occasionally went with the crowd to Deering's rooms, but the master could discover in him no trace of that eager boyish responsiveness that he got abundantly from so many others. He attracted Deering, who was instinctively sympathetic with the appeal of lonely boyhood; and, for all Erroll's apparently not-difficult relations with a gay and lively set, Deering imagined him as essentially lonely.

Once or twice the master insisted on his coming out for football practice to try for a place on one of the minor teams. Erroll proved, however, a duffer at the game, and it was evident that he was annoyed by the enforced exercise.

Then, suddenly, there occurred an incident—it was not long after the Boxford game and just before the mid-term examinations—that vividly impressed the boy afresh on Deering's consciousness. It was almost the first experience in which the new master felt that he had got beneath the particularly nice surface of his young friends.

He was sitting in his study one evening, after having made his rounds to see that the lights were extinguished, somewhat wearily correcting a bundle of papers that had accumulated during the last few days. He had paused for a moment to replenish

his wood fire and to light his pipe afresh, and he was vaguely considering whether he would not knock off and go for a chat with Morris, when there came a gentle tap upon his door. In response to his invitation Erroll entered. The boy was clad in pyjamas, and his bare feet showed beneath his long gray wrapper. He turned to Deering's stare, as he stood uncertainly at the door, a white troubled countenance, from which the freshness had recently been washed by a rain of tears. He was making no attempt to conceal his agitation, but he had lost little of his unconscious grace of manner or quiet courtesy.

"Come in," Deering repeated, rising and involuntarily extending his hand; and then waited, a little awkwardly, for the boy to explain his errand. "What is the matter?" He asked after a moment, as Erroll still stood irresolutely at the threshold.

"You don't mind my coming, do you?" the boy asked. He had not seen Deering's outstretched hand. "I—I want to make a confession to you, Mr. Deering."

The master's face lighted with quick sympathy. He motioned Erroll to a chair and himself sat down before his desk. The lad seated himself uncomfortably on the edge of the chair, and continued to regard Deering with wide-open, frightened eyes.

"Come—tell me. Whatever it is, I reckon we can get it straight."

"No—this will never be straight," said Erroll in a tone of despairing conviction. "I have done some-

thing—I don't know why—I can't explain—but it's a terrible thing, Mr. Deering."

"Yes? Tell me what it is, George; I shall understand, I think."

"I think you will, sir—that's the reason I've come. I couldn't keep it to myself any longer." Then he added in a breathless sentence: "I broke into Mr. Roylston's desk to-day and took one of to-morrow's Latin examination papers."

"What! you—tell me again; I'm afraid I don't quite——"

Erroll repeated the accusation against himself almost word for word, watching his companion's face the while with agonized apprehension. Deering was conscious of his burning gaze, and quickly veiled the surprised swift disgust that surged into his eyes.

"That is pretty bad, George, isn't it?" he said at last. "But you must tell me all about it, just why and how you did it."

"I don't quite know, I think," Erroll answered, dropping his eyes, a little relieved by the sympathy in the master's voice. "I can't do Latin. I suppose that's why I did it," he continued, with long pauses between the sentences. "I've flunked every Latin exam the year and more I've been here. I can't seem to learn from Mr. Roylston—I don't learn, anyway. I just felt I couldn't—I wouldn't flunk again. He sometimes takes the exams of the boys who fail and reads them with sarcastic comments to the class. He did that to mine last time.

I made up my mind then that I'd never bear it again."

"Yes, so——?" murmured Deering.

"Well, you see Mr. Roylston always has his exams printed in Monday Port, and when I saw him coming out this afternoon with a package of papers from the printer under his arm, I guessed it was the exams. I followed him, sir, over to Howard and saw him go into his room. He left his door open, and as I went by he was putting the package into his desk. He locked the desk and put the key in a little box on top of it. I waited round, sir, until he went out again, and then I slipped in . . . I—I found the key, sir, and opened the drawer of his desk . . . It was the exams for to-morrow—and I—I took one." His voice caught and he stopped, breathless.

"Yes, yes, I see, I see," said Deering; "and what have you done with it?"

"I had an awful fright, sir—it dropped out of the note book into which I had slipped it, as I was crossing the campus, and I didn't discover that I had lost it until I was nearly over to Standerland. But I turned back and found it all right. I haven't had five minutes peace since I took it. I burned it up at last. I couldn't sleep for worrying over what I had done. I just felt I must get up and come and tell you."

"I am glad you have done that," said Deering, trying to think what he must say. "Did you read the paper?"

"Yes, I read it and looked up all the passages set for translation," replied Erroll hopelessly, conscious that there was no way out for him there.

"At least," said Deering, "you have taken the first step toward righting the wrong you have done."

"It can't be made right—never."

"No," the master admitted, "not quite—ever. But you undo a great deal of it, you know. But let me ask you one thing more—I must ask it if I am going to be of any help to you—have you ever done anything like this before?"

"No—never, Mr. Deering—never! But you can't believe me," he added, catching back a sob.

"Yes, but I do believe you."

"But that doesn't help me—what can I do now?" asked the boy.

"Of course," replied Deering promptly, "you can not take that examination under any circumstances. That goes without saying, doesn't it?"

"I suppose I can't—*of course* I can't. But what am I to do?"

"Do you know what I think you must do, George?"

"No—no, sir."

"I think you will have to tell Mr. Roylston about it."

"Tell Mr. Roylston!" cried Erroll. "But he would never forgive me—he'd have me sent away from here."

"No, I don't think he would do that," insisted

Deering, with just a faint feeling of misgiving within. "But even if he does take it hardly,—don't you see?—that is the consequence you've got to face —that, or a more terrible one in your own soul?"

"Isn't it enough to tell you, sir; I thought——"

"No. It is a help to tell me, I think. But Mr. Roylston is the person you have wronged. You can't take that examination, George; and yet you must take some Latin examination. Don't you see you will be obliged to tell him?"

"But suppose," protested Erroll woefully, "suppose he'd think I ought to go away from here?"

"I don't believe he will feel that way, George; but, even if he does, you would have to go." He paused, a little at a loss to know what to assert about Mr. Roylston's probable attitude.

Erroll thought a moment perplexedly. Presently he fixed his dark soft eyes upon the master's face. "Do you despise me, Mr. Deering?"

Deering's hands went out instinctively; he felt an impulse to put his arms around the boy and comfort him. "Ah, my boy," he exclaimed, "we are none of us so above temptation, so incapable of doing wrong, that we dare despise another who has fallen in a moment of weakness. I am terribly, terribly sorry for you. I only want you to do every possible thing you can to make right the wrong you've done, so that you can face the future clean. That there is a risk it may go hard with you doesn't make it the less necessary that you must try at once to set things right with Mr. Roylston. You

will go, won't you, and promptly to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I'll go," said Erroll.

"And now for the other side of it," continued Deering. "You have been brought face to face with a great weakness—sudden swift temptation to stoop to dishonor to gain your end. This must teach you to realize that you cannot always have your own way, that you must face humiliation and failure sometimes, however hard it may be . . . But I won't preach to you; you see it as clearly and deeply as I do, or you would not have come to me to-night."

"I think I do, sir," said Erroll. He rose and took the hand that Deering held out. "I'll go," he added; "I'll take what is coming."

"And you will let me know what Mr. Roylston says, won't you? Whatever happens, this is the first and only time in your life that you will do a dishonorable thing."

Erroll's lip was trembling. "Good-night, sir," he said in a thick voice.

"Good-night," answered Deering.

He held Erroll's feverish hand in his own a moment in a firm friendly clasp. He wondered, as for an instant a mist veiled his eyes, that rather than despising him had he ever loved any one as tenderly.

Some time after the boy had left Deering went down to Morris's room to have the belated chat.

In the course of their desultory talk—for Deer-

ing was preoccupied with the experience through which he had so recently passed—he told his friend of the confession and of the advice he had given, without hinting at the identity of the culprit or defining the offense. It was an old habit of his to seek Morris's approval of his ethical judgments.

"You acted quite right," was Morris's comment. "I have always felt that the only objection to a master's receiving a boy's confidences is in the case that he should absolve the sinner there and then as though the confession had altogether canceled the sin, liquidated the debt against the school always incurred by a moral lapse. But confidences to a master are bad, if he doesn't definitely attempt to secure righteous action from the boy in subsequent situations. Poor dear old Roylston for so many years felt that was where I failed; but, happily, I fancy, he feels that way no longer. One certainly could not accuse him of that vice."

"Rather not," Deering agreed. "I don't know what we would have felt it safe to tell Roylston in my day; not for fear he wouldn't have acted, but for terror lest he'd have made us over-act. My poor little chap has to go to-morrow and have his sins out with him."

"Well," said Morris with a smile, "Roylston has mellowed with the years, thank heaven! It will be good for them both, I suspect. But your friend, nevertheless, will be in for rather a bad quarter of an hour."

CHAPTER IV

MACGREGOR STATES A PROBLEM

THAT night Deering did not sleep as soundly as usual, for he could not get out of his mind the picture of the woe-begone, guilt-racked boy. It was by no means his first experience in school or college of ugly passions or baleful weakness obtruding themselves into the care-free life of boyhood. He knew that youth must sometimes face tragic dangers. But the fact that he had several times before been brought into close contact with boys who had been conquered by or had splendidly won out against keen temptations to evil and dishonor, did not in the least diminish the genial optimism with which he viewed life in general and boyhood in particular. Such temptations, he knew, were exceptional. The fact that they should manifest themselves in a boy of George Erroll's evident breeding, personal attractiveness and fine sensibilities deeply troubled him.

But there it was—a fact, a tremendous fact in the boy's character and experience that must challenge his keenest effort to fathom and correct. And the task was not easier in that, despite what he now knew, the liking he had first felt for Erroll had not

diminished. After the shock of disgust for the crude and selfish theft, he was finding it literally hard to remember that it was a fact in George Erroll's personality that must be reckoned with.

He was anxious to know how Roylston would deal with him; and, if he forgave him, then all reference to the incident must be avoided with Erroll for some time to come. He must be helped to forget as well as to be sorry.

George came to report to him the evening of the day he had had his interview with Mr. Roylston in Howard House. "At first," he said, "I thought he would understand as you had, sir, that I had never done such a thing before and never meant to again; but then he asked me if any one knew of it except himself, and, of course, I told him I had been to you. For some reason or other he seemed not to like this. He wanted to know if I didn't realize that he was the person who had been wronged—'imposed upon,' he expressed it—and I said that of course I realized it but that I hadn't seen it so clearly until you put it to me."

Deering smiled involuntarily at the boy's tactlessness, wondering how it had turned out as well as it evidently had, not even daring to let Erroll know that he had been tactless. "Yes," he asked, "and what then?"

"He said he was sorry but that it was such a serious offense that he would have to take it to the Head Master."

"Yes—and you?"

"What could I say, sir? Of course he had a perfect right to go to the Head. I just kept still and waited. He thought a long time, and got up and walked up and down the room in a nervous kind of way; and then, when I thought he was going to tell me to come with him to the Rectory, he stopped in front of me and told me, all of a sudden, that he had changed his mind and was going to forgive me. He said he did believe that it was the first time that such a thing had happened with me, and that we would never mention the subject again. He also said that he knew it had been awfully hard for me to come to him, and that you were right when you thought that might be sufficient. He gave me a separate exam this morning, without saying anything to the fellows. It was a hard one, sir, and I don't think I passed."

"That's of comparatively little importance just now. But the thing that you must do from now on, George, is to show your appreciation of Mr. Roylston's forgiving you by buckling down to hard work. The surest way to convince him of your genuine repentance is to prove to him by study that you can pass his examinations honestly." He rose with this, thinking it wiser not to prolong the conversation.

Erroll started to go, but after he had taken a step, he turned and looked at the master. "I can't say much," he murmured in a thick and trembling voice, "but I'm more than grateful to you, Mr. Deering."

"That's all right. We'll follow Mr. Roylston's example, George, and close the subject for good and all. There will be no occasion to reopen it, I am sure." He shook hands swiftly but cordially, and turned back to his work.

This incident had its immediate and marked effect upon George Erroll. He took Deering's advice and began to work at his Latin as he had never worked before; and, in time, with the inevitable result of industry, he passed Latin examinations, if not with great credit, at least to Mr. Roylston's satisfaction. Toward Deering he showed his appreciation in a multitude of little ways. He gradually got into the way of dropping into the master's study for a quarter of an hour or so in the evening; and, as he often found other boys there, he began to develop easier relations with them as well. His quick intelligent mind, the warmth and depth of his feeling, the swift transitions of his mood from grave to gay, made his companionship interesting and agreeable. More than one boy asked another what had come over George Erroll. He was emerging into the consciousness of his formmates for almost the first time as possibly a desirable companion.

After the football season, which had ended with the great game against Boxford School a tie, and the supplementary fortnight of soccer, the winter that year set in early, and by the first week of December there was skating on Deal Water, a mile-wide lake between Deal Hill and Monday Port, and on Beaver Pond, a beautiful sheltered sheet of

water under the lee of Lovel's Woods below the school on the east. Hockey began, and Macgregor Meath, the captain of his form hockey team, impressed Deering as a coach.

One bright frosty afternoon, practice being over, Meath stood on the edge of his skates by the long low boards that marked off the Fourth Form rink. He was flourishing his hockey stick around his glowing red head, a circumstance that made conversation with his companion somewhat difficult.

"It beats me!" he ejaculated suddenly; and then he repeated sententiously, with another flourish, "it beats me!"

As Grafton, who was standing just outside the radius of the circles described by the hockey stick, made no reply, Meath continued, "It is perfectly obvious that Erroll can skate, but it is as obscure why he suddenly wants to."

"Stop flinging that club about, Mac, and I will give you the benefit of my advice," interposed Grafton, waiting his opportunity to glide in by the side of his captain.

Meath obligingly lowered his stick, received Grafton affably, and rested a patronizing arm upon his elbow. They continued to stand there watching their schoolmates circling about the rink or the many red-capped, red-sweatered skaters gliding hither and thither on the smooth clear ice beyond. Among them Deering, slim, fleet, agile, as boyish almost as any, darted in and out; and, as they looked at him, he stopped suddenly to place the tan-

talizing puck at a proper angle, poise his stick, and then with a swift glancing stroke send the puck clear across the rink to the farther goal. He was demonstrating a particularly effective stroke for the benefit of George Erroll. The puck was returned, and the boy had his try at it; the maneuver being repeated several times before Deering apparently was satisfied with his pupil's form.

"I have it!" exclaimed Macgregor, after having scrutinized the procedure with the air of an expert.

"Sure," rejoined the literal Grafton; "he's making good. Any one but Deering would have been satisfied with it ten minutes ago."

But Meath's analysis was less athletic than psychological.

"As usual, Graf," he commented, "you come in on the goods-van, as an Englishman would say. I have been unwillingly convinced for the past week that Erroll has made good and that Tom will have to be chucked to make place for him. But what I meant when I said 'I had it' was that I at last understand why Erroll has tried to make good or displayed, in fact, any interest in hockey at all. He's loafed, you may recall, two precious years."

"Oh!" murmured Grafton, not affecting an interest he did not feel in his leader's mental processes; but almost immediately he added, with the courtesy that Meath somehow exacted from his companions, "I suppose you want to tell me, so fire away."

"I do," said Meath, but for the next few moments

he remained silent. The practice was over, and the boys were skating toward the shores on their way to school, for a distant bell had warned them of the afternoon recitations. Meath looked at various groups as they left the ice, regarding them all with his own curious and exclusive interest; appraising them, it might seem, from his own subtle point of view. Grafton patiently waited his pleasure, having engaged the honor long in advance of walking back to school with him.

Suddenly Meath pointed his hockey stick into the face of the red sun that was sinking in a bright light green sky over Deal Hill. "Voilà!" he exclaimed. "Behold, that is to say," he condescended to translate, recalling his auditor.

Grafton stared stupidly at the sunset, and discerning nothing unusual in that, nor any connection between it and his companion's remark, he turned his nice blue eyes and a blank face to his friend.

"Well?" he ejaculated.

"What do you see?"

"The sun, you jackass."

"Get back to earth; I'm not referring to the sun."

"What, then?"

"Look again."

"I'm looking," exclaimed Grafton irritably.

"What do you see?"

"Where, idiot?"

"Beneath the sun."

"I see Mr. Deering walking up Deal Hill with George Erroll."

"Exactly," said Meath, and heaved a sigh of relief, hinting that he was reassured as to his friend's sanity.

Grafton, though he saw with his eyes, could not interpret with his mind. He was accustomed not to follow Macgregor's swift transitions, and he also knew that if he were patient they would be as patiently explained.

"In spite of all my efforts, Graf, old chap, you are as thick as you were the day you came to school. Association with your mental superiors serves only to emphasize your essential stupidity."

"Thick! why so?" cried Grafton, flushing with momentary anger. "Stop sticking that club into my neck, and tell me what the deuce you are driving at."

"I am trying," Meath replied, "in my poor way, to give you an ocular demonstration of the theory I am about to propound."

"I don't get you."

"No?"—in a tone of insulting incredulity. "Well, I was not hopeful. I'll speak in words of one syllable: Erroll takes to skating because he has come to adore our sub-assistant, first deputy, under professor of mathematics."

"Oh!" said Grafton.

"That comment stales by repetition, little one. But I convey nothing?"

"Nothing. What's it convey to you?"

"A number of things."

"Tell me one of them."

"You are too dense. I? I plume myself; I vindicate afresh my ability to think for the crowd; I proclaim myself again the brains of the bunch. I deplore my fate in being compelled to fraternize with sheep, with creatures whose brains are wool; who, for example, look at the sun and see the sun."

"Oh, call off that rot!"

"Yes, Donald, I shall. But acknowledge that I do not overestimate myself; have the grace, if you lack the wit, to say something to relieve the tension of the painful inactivity of your mental processes."

"Fudge, you fool! What does all your drivel amount to? Erroll's cottoned to Deering; therefore he takes to hockey 'cause Deering's keen on it: boot-lick, favoritism, kitten clubs, and all that."

"You repeat the lesson with the facility of a parrot, demonstrating afresh the density of your gray matter. But, as usual, you draw a conclusion that is plain common garden variety of stupidity."

"What conclusion do you draw, then," asked the tortured Grafton, "that you are strutting about like a rooster in a barn yard?"

"There's a reason."

"For what?"

"Erroll's adoration."

" 'Spose there is; what's it to you?"

"A problem, infant, a problem; a neat little psychological problem. There's a rotten poem called

'Fate' about two souls that draw together out of the vast and all that sort of thing, that high-brow girls get off when you're sitting out a dance. Do you know it?"

"No."

"I suppose not; well, it is not that sort of thing between Erroll and Deering. I shall find out what it is."

"Why shouldn't Erroll like Mr. Deering?" persisted Grafton. "Don't you? don't I, despite——"

"Despite your asinine aversion the first few weeks of term? Yes, we all do, immensely. But Erroll's a different sort."

"Yes, you're darned right there—a different sort."

"If you must interrupt, be original,—isn't that just what I'm saying? Point is, *we* are Deering's sort; Erroll isn't at all. Queer, eh? Do you get me?"

"A little."

"Good. The problem interests me. I shall find out all I want to know."

"Perhaps you will, perhaps you won't; why bother?" asked Grafton.

"The pursuit of my favorite hobby: as the poet hath said, 'The noblest study of mankind is man.' Cheer up, brother. Here, I'll beat you to the boat-house; then we'll skip up to school, brew a pot of cocoa in my closet, get our showers in the meantime, and be all nice and clean and mercifully full by our five o'clock."

"Sure thing," cried Donald with brightening face.

"All right. We're off."

Meath turned about on his skates, and was away like a bird, skimming over the smooth ice in the teeth of the northwest breeze toward the boathouse on the western shore. Grafton made a false start, recovered himself, and darted after him. He was longer legged and the race was not to the swift. They reached the boathouse almost at the same instant, went spinning, digging the heels of their skates into the ice for twenty yards or so, and landed on top of each other in a bank of snow at the foot of the boathouse steps. They picked themselves up, rubbing arms and knees ruefully over real or imaginary bruises and laughing heartily at their mishap. Then they took off their skates and began the long climb up the hill.

CHAPTER V

SUNDAY NIGHT

George Erroll, until he had entered the Second Form of Deal School in the spring term somewhat over a year before, had led a singularly lonely, self-absorbed life, very different from that of most of his schoolmates.

His mother, a charming but somewhat vague and irresponsible sort of person, after her early married life had gone to pieces on the shoals of incompatibility, had drifted about the world in a not-altogether successful attempt to find compensation for domestic happiness too lightly sacrificed. Curiously enough, in the settlement that was effected between George's father and herself, she retained the custody of the two children, the boy and his sister Laura, who was several years the elder. Mrs. Erroll was fond of what she called "life," and America seemed to her flat and unprofitable: she preferred to wander about European capitals and resorts, out of season when her finances were low, but at the most expensive and fashionable hotels when her fluctuating income permitted.

The two children led in many ways a miserable

existence. They were at once precociously developed and surprisingly immature. At last, when they reached the age when governesses were not only a nuisance to their mother but an impossible expense, they were placed in private schools in the south of England. George would never forget the unutterable horror of those two terms in that Sussex school. Then, unexpectedly, Mr. Erroll, the almost forgotten father, had communicated with the mother to the effect that he would educate the boy, provided he should be sent to school and college in America, and agreed, whether wisely or not, to Mrs. Erroll's condition that the acceptance of this plan would involve no personal communication between himself and his son. That, she declared, she would never, never consent to,—a stand for which she would have found it difficult to give an adequate reason. Accordingly, she brought George to America; and, after visiting several schools, placed him at Deal, and sailed back to England, whither he was to come to her for the Christmas and summer vacations. She would herself visit America in the spring, she promised, so that he could be with her during the Easter holidays. These plans were carried out, at least in part: during the Long Vacations George would be dragged from French spa to Swiss cure, and even in winter make the long dreary voyage for the sake of the few bright exciting days in London or Paris with his mother and Laura. But Mrs. Erroll did not find it possible or convenient to come to America in the spring, so the boy was left

to shift rather dolefully for himself during the fortnight's vacation at Easter.

He had always rebelled against the kind of life he was forced to lead; he had hated it, and yet not known how to escape it, and the alternative of the English private school had been even more terrible. Deal, despite his shadowy career there so far, had been to him a haven of rest and peace.

He was loyal to his mother and as fond of her as she allowed him to be; invented excuses for her, assured himself that she had been gravely wronged, and that she deserved the compensations she so abundantly exacted. He had not been taught to admire his father. Of his sister Laura he was passionately fond. One of the greatest trials of the Sussex school had been the separation from her, as it had been the cause of his frequent homesickness—a homesickness unacknowledged and unsuspected—during his first year at Deal.

Throughout his lonely boyhood he had intensely desired and altogether been deprived of intimates, of the life of boys he read about in books. Even Laura, wonderful as she was, could not give him that. They could only discuss it together, talk about it, day after day, night after night, as they wandered on the great verandas of continental hotels and listened to the eternal band. He had been glad to come to Deal in the hope of getting such life, apprehensive as he was that he must for long and often be disappointed. He passionately desired friendships, and had thrust himself at school—hold-

ing his breath in terror the while—into the group of easy-going fellows he admired. He had kept his footing among them somehow, and that was all. He was shy, but he was determined not to be victimized by his shyness. He passionately admired all the activities of the boy life about him, but he did not know how to get part in them.

Deering's vivid likable personality had swiftly and strongly appealed to him. Then had come the unaccountable temptation and still more incomprehensible fall, followed by intense remorse and need for confession; and for once he had acted before his habitual shyness had inhibited his will. This first sympathy from any other in the world than the vanished Laura, this frank response to his advance in the hour of trouble, deeply evoked his gratitude and inspired his devotion.

And then suddenly, it seemed to him, just as things were beginning to go his way for once, when even boys had begun to notice him and Deering had been persistently kind, with the hockey and all that, when for the first time his naturally genial open spirit was unfolding to kindly influences, term ended. He was racked away across the sea, exiled from the life that had begun to interest and absorb him. As he stood on the deck of the great liner and felt the spray as it was churned up by the plunging bows and the sharp winter's wind as it swept across the wide wastes, it seemed to him as though Deal were the dream life, and all the hopes and fears, the sin and repentance, of the last few months there as a

story that had been told him; and Paris—Paris it was to be this time—and his fond foolish mother, and bright lights, and hotels, and theaters, and music, was the old and the only reality into which he was awakening. As he stood on the lonely deck, scalding tears started to his eyes. He wanted—oh, terribly!—some one to talk to, to tell his deepest hopes and deepest sorrows to. He had not been taught to pray, but it was something very like a prayer of gratitude he uttered as he thought of Laura. . . .

The dreary journey was over at last; and the bright busy absorbing week with Laura and his mother in Paris passed rapidly also, and at length the rough wild voyage across the wintry seas to America was but a memory.

He was back again in the routine of the winter term at Deal. At first he was shy once more; he could not take up all at once even the little place he had made for himself before the Christmas vacation. Despite Mr. Deering's general invitation for such of the Fourth Formers as wished to come to his rooms that first Sunday night at school, when evening came, instead of going as he had planned, Erroll went to his own little bedroom study. He sat alone before his desk, somewhat vainly persuading himself that he was happy, and enthusiastically assuring Laura so in the scrawling letter he was writing. His door was closed; the boys on the floor were gone to Deering's rooms or were gathered elsewhere in congenial groups. He was writing to Laura. . . .

After a time there came a gentle tap upon his door.

"Come in," he called, hastily placing a book over the pages of his letter.

The door opened softly and Macgregor Meath appeared.

"Hello!" said Meath. "I say!" (Macgregor sometimes affected Anglicisms of a sort.) "May I come in?"

"Yes, do," replied Erroll, as his cheeks flushed and he half rose. "Sit down, won't you?"

Meath entered, closing the door behind him. He declined the proffered chair and perched himself comfortably upon the bed.

"What doing? Writing letters?" A tell-tale page protruded from beneath the Cicero's *Orations*.

"Yes," George admitted, and blushed again.

"Ah!" smiled Meath. "Girls?"

"No, no, not at all," protested Erroll. "Only my sister."

"I wish I had a sister," said Macgregor gently, with the air of begging his host not to consider him impertinent.

To this the boy could think of no reply. He knew that Meath's curious bright eyes were upon him, fathoming his absurd devotion to Laura, fathoming anything—everything, perhaps; but deeper than this was his satisfaction that a fellow so popular, so much in demand, should take the trouble to drop into his room. He felt bitterly chagrined that now that Meath was there it must be impossible for him

not to be bored, for him not immediately to leave disgusted and return no more. Perhaps Macgregor fathomed these strange terrors, for he himself felt an unwonted shyness; but the idea of leaving in disgust did not enter his head. He had come with a purpose, and he was not one to go with that purpose unfulfilled. He trusted instinctively to his facility of passing lightly over embarrassing moments. His quiet inspection of Erroll's good looks, painful courtesy, and shy alarms, resulted unexpectedly in his being conscious that back of all that was something worth knowing for its own sake. For the moment his ulterior purpose faded from his mind. He felt an impulse to draw Erroll out, to know him better, to like him.

"How did you spend your vacation?" It was a conventional question and relieved the tension instantly.

"I?" said Erroll with a start. "Oh! I went to Paris; my mother lives on the other side, and I always go over at Christmas and in the summer."

"Paris?" repeated Macgregor, opening his eyes. "Sounds pretty good to me. How long did you have there?"

"Over a week; but you do so much, it seems longer. If it weren't for the voyage, I'd like it."

"The voyage!—that would be almost the best part of it to me," Meath returned. "I've never been over, and I'm crazy to go. My guvnor says I may next summer, if I can get the right sort of man to

take me. I'd much prefer to go with a chap of my own age. You've lived over there, you say?"

"Yes, most of my life," Erroll replied. "But I would much rather we lived at home. I've made the voyage so often that it has no interest. I've almost come to wish we didn't have Christmas and Easter vacations."

"You're keen on school then?"

"I don't know; I guess I am. I mayn't seem to be——"

"You have kept so confoundedly to yourself," said Meath, interrupting, "that we haven't known you. Shouldn't think you'd like it."

"Why? Don't you?"

"Yes I do," was Macgregor's cautious reply, "but then you see I don't think I should, if I didn't have a crowd. Recitations and that sort of thing bore me to extinction. Breakfast at seven is a barbarism. And then this running up and down the place, this 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir,' and 'Here I am, sir,' and 'Please, sir; I didn't do it, sir,' pall in the course of time. Then just think over the people who are charged with what they call our education! The Head—bless his dear old heart!—lives in the clouds. When one gets into the dizzy Sixth, one may know him, but not before. And Gumshoe Ebenezer Roylston—why does he instantly spring to mind when one mentions the faculty of Deal? To me, I confess, he's a curious study in abnormal psychology. You won't believe it, but I have a sneaking liking for that old bird,—for his lank unwelcome-

ness, his sprawling sarcasms: they enrich our humdrum existence. But I can't stand Pussy Gray purring around. His nickname fits him; for he is like nothing so much as a perfectly good sleek cat, with claws beneath her velvet paws. I abhor cats. Stenton's a good enough sort, I suppose, but he's not my kind. And Morris—Morris, I know, is before you as the refutation of all my heresies. No, old chap, Morris is simply a tradition—a threadbare overworked tradition, as distasteful to my Philistine spirit as high mass to a Protestant. I see no excuse for his extraordinary popularity. There are others,—Beverly, Jackson, old Williams,—but can they be said to exist in any adequate sense of the term? Last, but not least, there is Deering." He paused for a moment and narrowed his eyes to observe Erroll more closely.

George stared straight before him without blinking, without, that Macgregor could see, changing color. Meath admired such spontaneous self-control.

Suddenly aware that his guest was waiting for a comment, Erroll turned slowly. "You haven't very much use for the faculty, have you?" he asked.

"Ah!" returned Meath with a pathetic sigh, "have you?"

"I don't know. I hardly know any of them except as masters."

"You know Deering rather, don't you?"

Still Erroll's expression betrayed no special in-

terest in the subject. "Deering's been awfully decent in the house, don't you think so?"

"More than decent," agreed Meath promptly. "I'm frank to say I like him immensely. He's a wonder, if he doesn't get spoiled."

"How spoiled?" asked George.

"Oh, asses like Grafton take advantage of his whiteness—you remember that scene in Geometry? After too much of that sort of thing, a master learns that whiteness doesn't pay. He settles down to being crabbed and sour, contents himself with a few beastly kittens or comes to abominate the whole bloomin' lot of us. One hopes for better things for Deering."

Erroll was silent a moment. "I think he will keep white," he said somewhat colorlessly, after a pause.

Suddenly Meath pulled himself off the bed, rose and stretched his arms. "Aren't you going to his feed?"

"No—I wasn't," George replied. "I—I meant to finish this letter."

"Stow that," said Meath, "and come along. You're a fool to keep to yourself this way."

George recalled swiftly how little after all that had been the case and how unavailable his hanging about had been. "I really haven't kept to myself," he answered.

"Whether or no," rejoined Meath, "come along now."

Erroll rose obediently enough, frankly glad that

fate had not permitted him to sink back into his old reserve, still more pleased that he should appear with Meath before such boys as would be gathered in the master's study.

Macgregor led the way down the hall. Deering's study door was open, and they could see that the room was full. A fire was roaring on the hearth, bright lights were glowing, and about a dozen boys, among whom were the other five of the Insufferable Six, were gathered about in various attitudes of ease. Deering and Grafton were engaged in pulling out a table into the middle of the room for the preparation of the inevitable rabbit. The master looked up as the two boys appeared in the doorway.

"Hello, George; hello, Mac; come in. We were just wondering who was to make the rabbit."

A chorus of greetings went up, and Erroll could not help noticing with a little throe of humiliation that most of them were directed at his companion and not at him. He slipped in behind his guide, and found a place somewhere in the background.

"I never fail a friend in the hour of need," Meath asserted with a genial smile that did for gracious recognition of his hearty welcome. Immediately he was the center of attention. He slipped off his coat, and took his stand at the table with the air of a pontiff presiding at a great function. "Here, Graf, make yourself useful as well as ornamental, and cut up the cheese." He sniffed at the generous portion of a great American cheese in the manner of a connoisseur. "A trifle mild—but firm and creamy.

Pem, fix the crackers—pardon my slang!—the biscuit. Here you, Erroll, emerge from the shadows and fill the lamp. You'll find the alcohol in Mr. Deering's bedroom closet. Jennings, you can dispense the ginger ale. I, in the meantime, will mix the ingredients."

He cut a piece of butter from the roll and began to stir it up in a cup with mustard, salt and pepper. "Welsh rabbit without beer," he commented, "is somewhat like Hamlet with Hamlet left out. Still I bow to the prejudices of the institution." He turned with a smile, and whispered in Grafton's ear, "Heaven save President Forester!"

Grafton snorted as he heard the cryptic formula of the Kappa Upsilon, but made his absurd bow in the direction of the Rectory.

"What's bit you, Graf?" exclaimed Snuffer Jennings, a small, mouse-colored, bespectacled boy.

Grafton made no reply.

"Spare the poor creature," said Meath to Jennings, "he blushes easily and says that blushing hurts. Where's the milk?"

"Under your nose, Mac," answered Deering.

"Oh, yes! thank you, sir. I always look for beer. Force of habit." He engaged them all. "I must apologize for the rabbit in advance. My rabbits never thrive well under this strictly temperance diet."

Despite his apologies, Meath was famous for his rabbits. Even Mrs. Forester had been known to in-

vite him to preside over the creation of one at the Rectory on a Saturday night.

The boys had fallen to their appointed tasks under the stress of Macgregor's repeated exhortations. Others sat about and chaffed them. Having been pulled into the foreground, Erroll stayed there, hanging about at Meath's elbow. Deering was preoccupied with getting a stubborn pipe to burn. Meath, with the tonic of success in his veins, was in his best form. He could talk while he worked; indeed he was capable of talking upon every occasion and about most subjects. The few that baffled him he had the knack of turning. Accurate information he despised as a prejudice of narrow minds. In spite of his volubility, Deering estimated him as shrewd and sensible.

"Bully, Erroll old top," exclaimed Meath at last, interrupting himself in a digression; "now find the matches, will you?"

"I say!" he continued, looking up after he had set the lamp to burning; "what have you people been reading? Kingsbridge stories? They're certainly corkers, and no mistake! They'd convince me, if I needed conviction, that my ancestors made no mistake when they went to Kingsbridge for their education. Contrast these Kingsbridge stories with that rotten book we read about—oh, very well! I won't. For gosh' sake, Graf, go on with the cheese, we'll never get the thing started. I'll tell you one thing"—he placed his bare freckled arms akimbo—

"I've made up my mind that Kingsbridge is the place for Erroll."

"Right!" said Deering; "I've made up my mind to the same effect."

"Great minds, you know, magister. How about it, George?"

"I'm going to Harvard, you know," Erroll replied, catching his breath with sudden embarrassment to find himself the subject of conversation.

"Come, little one," continued Macgregor, "give us a reason for the curious faith that's in you."

"I don't know; I've always planned to."

"It won't do," said Meath sternly; "not at all, at all."

"Don't let him bluff you, Erroll," put in Grafton, who was also headed Harvardward, as he dropped the cheese bits into the chafing-dish. "Meath doesn't know a good thing when he sees it even by aid of a microscope."

"I confess, Grafton," rejoined Macgregor quickly, "that I need a microscope when I want to find good things in deah old Ha'va'd. Ha'va'd for you —yes, all right, all right. We'll submit manfully; bear up bravely, and all that sort of thing; but Erroll's heading henceforth for Kingsbridge. Don't protest, little one. We know what is best for you. You agree with me, Mr. Deering?"

"I mostly do, Mac, as you know."

"I'm flattered, sir. You confirm me in conceit. No, but really, George"—he fixed Erroll with a penetrating glance,—"I mean it; I am going to talk

it over with you seriously. Ah!" he exclaimed, giving his attention to the chafing-dish afresh, "she begins to sputter. Ready with the milk, Pem."

There was a breathless silence while the concluding rites were performed. Soon Grafton was handing up warm plates of biscuit from the hearth, and the boys were crowding about the table, holding their plates for a portion of the golden fluid that Macgregor had begun to dispense.

"Well, Mac," said Deering, having tested the rabbit, "another success! Your creations are in a different class from the articles that Kit Wilson used to concoct in my day at school. Kit was not an artist; and, alas! he always insisted on being the cook. We were patient and long-suffering."

"I have too few accomplishments," said Macgregor gravely, as he twisted a portion of the melted cheese about his fork, "not to be grateful for this public recognition. But to go back to Kingsbridge——"

"No," said Deering, with a laugh, "you are to go *to* Kingsbridge."

"Quite right," mumbled Meath with his mouth full.

At length the so-called feast was disposed of; and one by one the replete and contented boys said good-night and took their leave. It was almost ten, their Sunday night bedtime. Pembroke and Erroll remained behind to help clear up; Meath lingered to assist Mr. Deering in giving directions. That too at last was done. Macgregor slowly put on his coat,

but still stood irresolute. Pembroke said that he wished to stay on for a few moments to talk with the master about the hockey schedule.

"In that case," observed Macgregor, "pretenses for further delay fail me. Good-night, Mr. Deering; thank you ever so much. Come on, Erroll; I'll see you down the hall."

They shook hands then with Deering and wandered down the hallway toward their rooms, Meath's patronizing arm about Erroll's shoulder. Deering and Pembroke glanced involuntarily after them.

"Has our philosopher adopted a new protégé?" the master asked with a smile.

"It looks so," was the reply.

For a moment Deering was lost in reflection. "On the whole, I'm glad," he said presently. "Erroll needs friends. He will be liked, I fancy, when you people take the trouble to know him."

Pembroke smiled pleasantly, and his deep clear dark eyes lighted, as they commonly did when he was addressed; but Erroll had not yet dawned upon his consciousness, and he was too accustomed to Macgregor's vagaries to be specially interested in whether he had adopted a new protégé or not.

"About the hockey schedule, sir——"

"Yes, to be sure," said Deering. "Let me see what you have arranged for."

CHAPTER VI

GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, AND FRIEND

On the Wednesday evening following the rabbit in Deering's rooms Macgregor Meath determined to pay a nocturnal visit to Donald Grafton, in whom of late there had been symptoms of incipient rebellion that it behooved a general of Meath's astuteness to heed.

He made his way, as usual, down the fire-escape to the quadrangle and along the cloisters past Montrose to Howard House. Entrance into Howard after hours by way of doors was unknown even to a youth of Macgregor's intrepidity, for Mr. Roylston's qualifications as guardian were as effective as the cherubim with flaming swords placed at the gates of Eden to prevent the return of the exiled Adam and Eve.

Hints to Grafton that the lowering of "the rope of sand" at ten-thirty would be appreciated had been unavailing, so that Meath was constrained to employ Polly Teal to forward his enterprise. Polly's activity was somewhat impaired by his environment, but his spirit had not been curbed. It was not of the least importance to him what Macgregor purposed; he was of a hospitable frame of

mind, and assured his leader that the rope would be put out at the customary signal.

"And don't forget," he added as they were parting at the close of evening study, "to bring some chocolate. I'm broke. I've not had a single bite inside me since Sunday 'gainst which my whole nature hasn't rebelled."

Meath gravely assured him that this misfortune should be remedied, and proved as good as his word. As the bell in the Chapel tower solemnly tapped once at half-past ten, he was climbing over the window-sill of Polly Teal's bedroom and bestowing upon its grateful occupant two large bars of sweet chocolate and a pocketful of biscuit.

Teal's gold-topped, pink and white face gleamed in the moonlight. He slipped back into bed, covered himself up, and gave Macgregor the most cordial invitation to make himself comfortable. But Meath was warmly clad in sweater and great-coat.

"What's up?" asked Polly between bites.

"It's about time," Meath answered, "that the Kappa Upsilon got together and gave a feast. According to Pem, we've got over five dollars in the treasury, and I have a wonderful plan for having our next feed at the pie-house. The old lady will do anything for me. We can manage to sneak out and get down there some night by ten-thirty. That's what I came to see you and Grafton about."

"Good idea!" said Polly. "Let's go in and wake Don up."

"No, no," protested Macgregor; "I'll go alone

presently. Seems to me Graf needs a little 'suasion of late, and it will be better for me to see him alone. You can get in your good work to-morrow."

Polly was promptly indignant. "That's the way it always is," he exclaimed petulantly, "you never let me in on anything till it's all planned."

"But you are in, before any one, kid. Though to tell you the truth you're a sort of sieve; you always want to brag about your exploits."

"When have I ever been a sieve, I'd like to know! You know darn well that Don's my best friend, and you profess to be one of my pals, and half the time you two have something up your sleeves that you won't let me in on. I—I swear, I——" But emotion choked him.

Meath was frankly angry. One could always be sure that Polly would be somewhat of an ass, but one was never certain what form, annoying or amusing, his jackassness would take. He turned irritably now, for Polly was one of the few of his companions with whom he could never learn to give the soft answer that turns away wrath.

"Weep, why don't you? You can turn on the tears by winking. Bawling is your idea of an argument. Go ahead and get it over."

Polly obeyed. Macgregor could hear the throaty sobs; almost, he imagined, the great tears dropping upon the pillow.

"Well, that's the way it always is," protested Polly weakly.

"Now see here," exclaimed Meath; "don't be a

fool. I can't stand you when you play that cry-baby act. Think of it, man; you're in the Fourth Form. You ought to cut it out."

"I c—c—can't help it," muttered Teal from the bedclothes.

"Comfort yourself then with chocolate; because I am going in to see Graf, and I'm going alone. I'll be back before long and tell you what he says."

He went into the study and closed the door behind him, leaving the sensations of gratified hunger and jealousy contending for the possession of Polly's breast.

He slipped softly into Grafton's bedroom and stood looking down for a few moments at the sleeping boy. The dim light of the moon, shining through a bank of fleecy clouds, faintly illuminated the chamber.

Grafton soon stirred in his sleep, turned over, and suddenly opened his eyes.

"Who is it?" he exclaimed in momentary alarm, sitting bolt upright in bed.

"Shish!—it's only Mac."

"Oh, confound it, Mac! I want to sleep." He threw himself back and turned his face petulantly to the wall.

Undaunted by this reception, to which he was not altogether unaccustomed, Macgregor took up his position on the foot of the bed.

"I've got to have a talk, Graf. I'm arranging a feed for Saturday night at the pie-house; Kappa

Up, you know. I can fix Mrs. Wadmer, and there's over five dollars in the treasury."

"Hang it! let's talk about it some other time," muttered Grafton.

"Can't—by-laws require all transactions of the Kappa Upsilon shall take place after lights, and I'm nothing if not a stickler for the rules of the game."

He said no more, but rather noisily unwrapped a bar of chocolate and began to munch with unction upon the sweet. Donald was seized suddenly with the pangs of hunger, but with an heroic effort controlled them.

"I'm not going to talk. You can sleep on the window-seat, if you want. I'm dead to the world." He breathed with rude force to give point to his words.

"All right, sleep away," murmured Macgregor; "I'll make myself comfortable." He curled up puppy-wise at his friend's feet.

"Oh say," he exclaimed suddenly, "have a bit of chocolate, won't you? Sorry I didn't think of offering it to you sooner."

Human nature could not resist this temptation, not Donald Grafton's human nature anyway. He removed his arm from beneath the covers and reached down for the chocolate. Almost an entire bar awarded his concession.

"Thanks," he mumbled.

For a few moments the two boys ate in silence.

"What's all this about a feast at the pie-house?" asked Donald after a moment or so.

"I thought it would be a good stunt to have our next feed at Mrs. Wadmer's," replied Macgregor. "I can fix the old lady all right, but Pem and Doug are almost sure to kick. I wanted your help in persuading them; but we will talk it over some other time."

"They won't kick," asserted Grafton.

"I think they will," Meath replied. "Pem has been developing a conscience toward the institution —Heaven save President Forester."

"Confound it, Mac! I can't get up. Make believe I've bowed."

"I'm sorry," observed Meath with a laugh. "I'll be more careful. If that sort of thing goes on, you know, all the fun of the Kappa Up, all the fun of being here at all, will be over. It's serious, Graf—honest."

"Pshaw! I don't take any stock in that. Tom and Polly will be for it anyway."

"Polly will, of course," Macgregor agreed. "You can do anything with Polly: he's clay in your hands. I just left him weeping because I insisted on coming in here alone. Poor kid! he's so jealous he can't see straight."

"Poor old Poll!" murmured Donald affectionately; "he can't help showing his feelings, but he's a corker all right."

"Of course he is. He's always ready for anything; so is Tom. But we can't count on Pem any

longer, and Doug is almost sure to follow his lead."

"Well, there is a certain amount of risk," said Grafton thoughtfully, "and on a Saturday night too. You know how the Head treats breaking bounds after lights. Norton got fired for it last year."

"Norton went to town—quite a different part of speech; besides he hadn't any sense. I'll cook up a plan that will be absolutely safe. You just try to make it O.K. with Pem and Doug."

"I can do that, I guess."

"By the by," said Meath after a pause, "I want to invite Erroll to the feed as my guest—we're each allowed to ask somebody once a year, you know. Do you mind?"

"Yes, I do rather," said Grafton, suddenly sobering. "I don't like Erroll——"

"Why not? What's the matter with Erroll?"

"Nothing particular, I don't like him, that's all. But I suppose you have the right to ask whomever you want. I simply would rather have some one else, but I'll make no objection. Go ahead."

Meath, having won his point, made no reply. After a few moments' silence, he thought Grafton had fallen asleep again, and was about to slip out.

"Say, Mac!" Donald had stirred again.

"Yes?"

"Remember that day on the ice last term?"

"What day?"

"The day you pointed out Erroll walking up the hill with Mr. Deering?"

"Yes, I do—in a vague sort of way."

"Well—what progress are you making?"

"Progress?—what do you mean?"

"Have you found out what you said you intended to?"

Macgregor reflected. "I remember now," he said after a moment's silence. "I had quite forgotten about it. Nothing in that, old boy. Deering's just been darned decent to the kid; naturally Erroll takes to him."

"That's what I said then," commented Grafton somewhat dryly, "and you told me that my brains were made of wool."

"Did I? A funny idea bit me, but there's nothing in it."

"What did bite you?"

"One of my fool notions; but it's out of my head now. I've seen a lot of Erroll of late. You'll like him."

"I'm quite sure I shan't, but that doesn't matter. What! going?"

"Must. I've got Polly to fix yet, and it's getting late."

He closed Grafton's bedroom door softly behind him. He entered Teal's room very quietly, paused for a moment and glanced at the bed. The foolish Polly had cried himself to sleep. Macgregor smiled and stepped to the window. He slipped over the sill, and slid, rather than climbed, down the ladder. Five minutes later he was safe in his own bed in Standerland.

Preparations for the feast progressed apace. Meath persuaded Mrs. Wadmer to cook them some fried chicken and candied sweet potatoes, but not without exerting all his blandishments. Mrs. Wadmer tried, according to her lights, to observe the rules of the school; but her lights were dim and persuasion sometimes had the effect of making them feeble to a degree. In itself a feast at the pie-house on a Saturday night could not be supposed to endanger the morals of the boys engaged upon it, but, as one boy had been expelled the year before for breaking bounds at night, Doctor Forester had warned the school that such breaking of the rules for whatever reason would be dealt with severely.

Despite his confidence, Grafton was unable to induce either Ned Pembroke or Douglas Ware to join in the feast; and Meath, more accurately estimating their firmness, decided not to put his leadership to the test by attempting to persuade them, though their refusal irritated him excessively. He determined to push the thing through notwithstanding opposition in the society and danger from without.

During the week, to Erroll's increasing satisfaction, Meath had continued to seek his companionship and to display unmistakable friendliness; and it needed just such encouragement to restore him to the stage of expansiveness he had reached before the Christmas vacation. Under Macgregor's genial tutelage he was acquiring ease and confidence in his relation with the boys; and as most of Meath's friends followed his line and began to welcome Er-

roll a little more heartily as he came among them, his heart was filled with satisfaction at their recognition and friendliness. These developing relations with his formmates had the effect of making Erroll's relations somewhat less intimate with Deering. But the master understood the cause of this and was glad for the boy's sake.

It was not until the morning of the feast that Meath gave his invitation to Erroll. "The whole thing is a dead secret, you understand," he said, having explained the nature of the occasion. "I ought to warn you that there's a certain risk of being nabbed; but we'd like to have you come."

"Sure, I'll come," replied Erroll, flushing with pleasure. He would have risked expulsion for the sake of cinching intimacy with this crowd, whom for so long he had admired across an unbridgeable abyss.

Meath approved of this reckless acceptance of his proposal; perhaps here after all, he thought, was a boy after his own heart.

"Good!" he commented. "Come to my room then at ten-twenty to-night, and we'll get out by the fire-escape and go down together. I have a rope stowed in my locker for use in getting back."

This invitation seemed to Erroll as the dawn of a new day in his school life, as the breaking down of the barriers between his formmates and himself, the marking of a milestone—he exhausted his imagination in finding metaphors for his analysis. George was introspective beyond his years; every experi-

ence of the actual world he many times intensified by anticipation or retrospect. He was deeply grateful to Meath and rejoiced that the risk enabled him to prove his appreciation. He liked Meath quite apart from the realization that he was a valuable aid to social progress. He found Macgregor's quizzical face, his bright sharp eyes, his red hair, his lithe little body, attractive and fascinating, and he was clever enough himself to appreciate Macgregor's precocious conversational ability without dimming its luster by rivalry.

All that Saturday he went about in a day-dream, eagerly anticipating the delights of the night to come. Occasionally a spasm of terror would seize him lest, now when his chance was given him, he should show himself shy and uncompanionable again, fail somehow at the test and so be reckoned with no more. But boyish optimism promptly rescued him from these momentary fits of depression. Work that morning was out of the question. He spent the study periods staring idly out of the windows at the dreary snow-buried playing fields or scanning the faces of the boys at work about him. Now and then, at a sharp reminder from the master in charge, he bent to his Cicero or Geometry, but only to dream over the text as he was dreaming when his glance was wandering aimlessly about. Sometimes he would scrawl his name or meaningless hieroglyphics over the blank pad on his desk.

As they were dismissed for the Geometry class, Snuffer Jennings walked along by Erroll's side

through the hall. Snuffer was a nice quiet unassuming little chap, absorbed usually in his lessons or in getting up a debate for the Civics Club. He liked everyone, Erroll particularly of late, for until recently he had thought him rather a snob.

"Say, George," he said as they walked along; "Mr. Deering's given permission for a feast to-night in my rooms. Will you come?"

"Thanks ever so much," Erroll replied, with a ridiculous glow of pride that he must refuse, 'I'm awfully sorry, but I have a date for to-night. Who's coming?"

"Just two or three—Barry More, Stew and Ned Pembroke."

"Pembroke!—I thought——"

"What'd you say?"

"Nothing. I'm ever so sorry, but I can't come."

"Wish you could," murmured Snuffer, wiping his spectacles. "If you can, drop in late."

In the Geometry class George made a sad mess of a simple proposition that Deering sent him to the board to demonstrate.

"You are unprepared," said the master at last sharply.

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you say so in the beginning? You can't do Geometry by intuition."

Erroll sat down in confusion, while Grafton took up the proposition and carried it with great gusto to a triumphant *quod erat demonstrandum.* Soon George forgot his mortification at Grafton's doing

well what he had done ill, and the dream light stole back into his eyes: he was dwelling again in that transcendental world of perfect friendships and phenomenal popularity that his imagination so successfully created.

"You are detained, Erroll," said Mr. Deering as the class was dismissed; "make up your work this afternoon."

"Yes, sir," said Erroll. But even this hour of his half-holiday so mortgaged did not affect him. He scarcely noticed the displeasure on the master's face as he left the room.

He went skating in the afternoon, but the January thaw had set in and the ice was soft. He was rather glad the skating was over, for after all he had not made the form hockey team as he had hoped. To his keen disappointment at the beginning of term Tom Watson, threatened by a rival, had miraculously improved. He fell in with Snuffer Jennings on the ice and went off with him for a tramp through Lovel's Woods, the great thickly wooded ridges above Beaver Pond that stretch from a mile or so back in the country to sprawl at last into the marshes at the breast of Strathsey Neck.

Erroll was preöccupied on the walk and had little to say, but Snuffer plodded along by his side, chatting, arguing both sides of a question, pouring out his thoughts to his own great satisfaction, and thinking that Erroll was very nice and friendly and that it was great fun to talk to him.

At last the interminable afternoon was over: the

hour's detention in the schoolroom had been served, supper was finished, and he had watched a basket-ball game in the gymnasium and had really not cared when the High School boys from Monday Port had given Deal an unexpected drubbing. Ten o'clock struck and he was in his room. He undressed partially, turned out his lights, and crept into bed. He heard Mr. Deering make his rounds and caught his remarks as he called down to Mr. Morris on the floor below. Then he got up, dressed quickly in old clothes and sweater, and sat waiting in darkness and suspense until twenty past ten should come.

At last the appointed minute was indicated on the face of his watch. He climbed out of his window and crept along the fire-escape to Meath's room and tapped on his window-pane. In a second Meath was with him, and his heart was beating again in intense relief.

They slipped down the ladder and ran quietly along the side of the building out of the quadrangle. The night was cloudy and dark. Soon they were crossing the playing fields and the plowed cornfields below the school on the east, running down hill hand in hand. At last Macgregor gave the signal to slow up.

"We're safe," he exclaimed, pausing for breath. "Gee whiz! I hate skipping out on a Saturday night. Everybody's about. Did you see Baxter standing in the door of Standerland as we dropped down?"

"I saw some one."

"It was Baxter—I could smell him in the dark. He is the backbone of the prefect body. Sweet little Bax, always on the job! Oh, I love him so. But we're safe, kiddo. Only hope the others will be as lucky."

"Who else is coming?"

"Graf, Polly Teal and Tom Watson. Pem and Doug got cold feet and backed out."

Erroll smiled to himself. Was he venturing where boys like Pembroke and Ware feared to tread? He asked Meath so, knowing that Macgregor had a subtle sense of humor.

Meath laughed. "Fools, you know——"

"So I was thinking," said Erroll dryly.

"There's a wave of moral earnestness, as the Doctor would say, going over the school of late. Have you noticed it? Pem's caught in it, I grieve to think. No, this way! we might as well keep to the fields; rotten walking, but it's safer."

The pie-house was situated below the school on the Old Beach Road, about half-a-mile north of the sea, having been banished in recent years from its former proximity to the school gates. For once Meath appreciated the more distant situation.

They plowed through the snow to the foot of the hill, where they found Grafton and Teal seated on a stone wall waiting for them.

"Thought you were never coming," said Polly.

"Lovely weather, isn't it?" said Macgregor. "Where's Tom?"

"On the way," answered Grafton. "Little Bev sent him into the schoolroom for raising a racket in form common-room. He had to stay in till ten fifteen. Fried chicken, did you say, Mac?"

"Fried chicken it is; sweet potatoes southern style, celery, cider, squash pie, mince pie, apple pie, and oceans of chocolate ice cream. Save the menus and present 'em to Pem and Doug as souvenirs. This is going to be the greatest ever."

They strolled slowly along the road till Watson caught up with them, and in a few moments were at the pie-house. Mrs. Wadmer, a tall angular dame, whose rough exterior concealed a kindly and sentimental heart, received them at the kitchen door. For her as for them this supper was the most elaborate departure from school rules that had yet been indulged in.

"Come in," she said. "Everything's ready. Only eat fast, do! Mr. Meath, I'm that worried, I'm sorry I ever promised you should come. I'm all a-quake for fear you will get caught."

"Who'll catch us? Even if they miss us," Meath assured her, "the best they can do is to nab us when we get back. Don't you worry, we'll never give you away. We'll remember this occasion with gratitude to our dying days." He stepped across the big old-fashioned kitchen and glanced with approval and satisfied sniffs at the chickens frizzling in the pan.

They had been but a few moments at table, clamoring at the hostess to hurry with the food, when they were startled by a sharp knock, the outer door

opened and Mr. Morris stalked in as if he too had been bidden to the feast.

The four boys gazed at him as transfixed; Mrs. Wadmer's knees were shaking as with an ague.

Morris advanced sternly. "Meath, Grafton, Teal, Erroll, Watson—you will return to school at once and report within fifteen minutes to your house masters. I will follow you almost immediately."

"Oh, Mr. Morris," exclaimed the frightened hostess, "don't be hard on 'em, sir; they meant no wrong. It was only for a fowl that I cooked that they broke the rules; if they have broke the rules, sir."

"I'll have a word with you alone in a moment, Mrs. Wadmer. You know as well as the boys that this sort of thing is positively against Doctor Forester's wishes. Be off, boys, at once! I will see you at school."

Five depressed, disappointed, and somewhat frightened boys passed slowly out of the warmth and grateful perfumes of the kitchen into the slush and darkness of the raw January night. No one spoke until they were well beyond earshot of the pie-house and were trudging drearily along the Old Beach Road toward the school.

"I suppose we'll get it," exclaimed Polly Teal; "but, oh, golly! if he had only waited till we were outside those chickens."

Meath turned fiercely. He had been restraining himself with difficulty. "It was your fault, I guess. Somebody blabbed."

"Who blabbed?" cried Polly in a blaze of anger.

"Who always blabs?" sneered Meath. "If we ever get into a mess, who's been to blame? Tell us, Teal, you ought to know."

Polly struggled to reply, but emotion choked him. He sputtered helplessly for a moment or so, and kicked vigorously at the snow and slush.

Meath removed himself from the radius of the spurting water. "Kick away, if it diverts you," he continued in aggravating tones; "that's your usual method of replying to anything you don't agree with."

Suddenly Donald Grafton turned to the rescue of his helpless room-mate. "Let him alone, Mac. We're all in the same boat. Why do you always accuse Polly of squealing?"

"As a matter of fact," returned Meath, "I didn't accuse him of squealing. I said he blabs, and he always does. He doesn't mean to perhaps, but he gets us into trouble just the same."

"Well, you haven't blabbed, have you, Poll?" asked Grafton of his chum.

"Of course I haven't!" cried Polly indignantly.

Meath shrugged his shoulders and dropped behind with Erroll and Watson, leaving Grafton and Teal to stalk on alone.

At last they reached the great quadrangle, and Grafton waited for the others to catch up. "Well," he asked, "what are we going to say?"

"There's nothing *to* say," Macgregor replied; "take the medicine with the best grace you can.

And give my love to your mother when you get home, will you?''

Donald snorted, and slung himself along with Teal.

''Do you think we'll all get fired?'' Erroll ventured to ask. He had scarcely spoken since they left the pie-house.

''Suspended, anyway,'' Meath replied shortly. Come on, let's go in and face the music.''

For the second time George felt the horror of exile threatening him.

CHAPTER VII

LIQUIDATION OF LIABILITIES

SOMEWHAT to the surprise of the five culprits, when they reported to their house masters they were merely told to go to their rooms. It might have seemed that they were to receive no severer punishment than the administration of late marks, but they knew better—that their cases were being reserved for more adequate treatment by the Head Master, which was a prospect that did not conduce to their peaceful slumber.

In fact the next morning directly after prayers they were arraigned before Doctor Forester in his study at the Rectory. Meath's whisper to his friends of 'Heaven save President Forester' did not provoke the glimmer of a smile on their blanched faces.

The Head most successfully looked his part on such occasions. He rose as they entered and took his characteristic attitude before the fire, with his swallowtails spread to the blaze.

"Boys," he said, "there seems to be no doubt as to the nature of your offense. What you did is in itself no crime, and under ordinary circumstances it might have been met with customary punishments.

But you are aware of the trouble we had last year with breaking bounds at night and the serious consequences in which it involved a member of the school. I warned the boys that in the future such offenses should be severely punished. I have heard what your house masters have to say, and I am ready to listen now to anything you may wish to plead in extenuation. Grafton, you may speak."

"I—I have no excuse, sir. I—I didn't realize it was so serious."

"Then," rejoined the Doctor, "you must be made to realize. Ignorance sometimes involves as serious consequences as wilful wrong-doing. Watson, have you anything to say for yourself?"

"No, sir," answered the laconic Tom.

"Teal?"

"I—I—n—no, sir; I—I——" To Macgregor's disgust, Polly burst into tears.

"Erroll?"

George gave a swift glance at the stern countenance of the Head, another at Meath. He was thoroughly frightened, for it was his first experience at the bar of academic justice. The school in Sussex loomed before him as the possible scene of his forthcoming exile. A bitter feeling of resentment crossed his mind, resentment against Meath for bringing this tragedy upon his head. He felt it must mean more to him than to the others standing so stolidly by; more even than to the hysterical Teal; infinitely more than to the reckless Meath, who had so lightly led them astray. Suddenly he realized that his hesi-

tation had been unduly prolonged, and that the Head was regarding him fixedly as he waited for an answer.

George swallowed painfully. "No, sir," he answered.

Meath breathed a sigh of relief.

"You, Meath," said the Head turning swiftly, "have you anything to say?"

"Not for myself, no, sir," answered Macgregor.

"Have you for your companions?"

"More or less," the boy replied sullenly. "It was my party. I persuaded them all to go."

"Not at all," Grafton interrupted, "we were all in the same boat. Mac was no worse than any of us."

"On the contrary," asserted Macgregor, "not one of them but more or less objected. It was my fault. I arranged everything, and coaxed them to go. I was practically responsible for the whole affair."

"Macgregor," said the Doctor, "without acquitting your friends of blame, I am inclined to agree with you. I believe that it was largely your fault. I admire your frankness, but my admiration does not induce me to remit or mitigate your punishment. You will all stay on bounds for one month from today: close bounds, I mean. And if you trifle with this punishment, I will dismiss you from school summarily. As for you, Macgregor, I am going to revive an antiquated but effective punishment, passing out of American schools, I fear, and for long

neglected among us here. I am going to cane you, sir, thoroughly and soundly."

"But, sir, that—I——" Erroll interrupted.

"Silence, Erroll. You will not dispute, Macgregor, the essential justice of what I propose?"

"Not at all, sir."

"The rest of you may go."

Meath remained behind in the study, closeted with the Head. Doctor Forester was tall, spare, vigorous, despite his sixty years; Meath, though tough, was small. . . .

It was quite ten minutes before he emerged from the Rectory door. Grafton and Erroll were waiting for him outside. There was no doubt that he had suffered or that the memory of his final few moments with the Head Master would not be forgotten for some time to come. His eyes were glistening with a suspicious moisture, his cheeks were smudgy; he walked slowly and kept his hands administered to his hinder parts. But there was a smile on his lips.

"God save President Forester," he ejaculated as he joined his friends. In his excitement he lapsed into a suspicion of brogue. "I leave it to you, me dears, if that grand auld man hasn't vindicated his existence anew. No bloomin' blasted rustication; no fool letters home; no sanctimonious jaw about the morals of the institooshion! Just a good plain wholesome old-fashioned lickin' that's good for body an' soul! Henceforth I love that grand auld man. But, O me dears, he's a powerful swing!

Swish! let me forget it. Give me your arms and lead me away to some quiet place where I can lie down."

"You're a corker, Mac; I couldn't have stood a caning," exclaimed Erroll with obvious admiration.

"No other way out," said Meath, "the goose was cooked. Otherwise we'd all been fired. I saw the auld diplomat caressin' that cane out o' the corners of his eyes when we came into the room. Says I to meself, I'll make a stab at takin' the blame. But don't credit me with virtues I don't possess: I'd have lied like a trooper, if there had been a ghost of a show. Wouldn't you?"

"I—I don't know," said Erroll, flushing slightly; "I don't think I would."

"Lie? No!" cried Grafton. "Of course I shouldn't; no gentleman would."

"You would if you could," said Meath, "but you couldn't if you would. 'Your face, my thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters.'"

"What's that mean?"

"Ah! pardon," murmured Macgregor. "That's a quotation, Grafton dear, from a not-unknown English classic called Macbeth."

"Oh, Shakespeare!"

"Even so."

"Anyway," said Grafton, disdaining poetry, "I'm glad you didn't try lying to-day."

"You may well be," responded Meath; "I told the truth for your sakes and suffer in consequence."

Meath's suffering was not, however, of long duration. He speedily recovered strength of body and vigor of spirit. For the time being they were all much occupied in spare times by a pensum (or impost) of Vergil handed out as an afterthought by their house masters, and Kappa Upsilon feasts were to be postponed to more favorable seasons. Close bounds for active boys were effective punishment. While their companions were enjoying the freedom of the ice, the beaches, the woods, they would be cooped up on the campus, and condemned for exercise to squash, fives or gymnastics.

One dull afternoon in February, about a fortnight after the caning, Macgregor Meath was loafing in George Erroll's room. He was seeking distraction in carving his initials upon the top of Erroll's desk.

Suddenly he threw the knife aside. "Gee whiz!" he exclaimed, throwing out his arms, "je suis très fatigué, mon ami. Je pense que I shall go mad."

George made no reply, but surveyed his desk a little ruefully. It was an honor to have Macgregor Meath's initials there, yet the desk was not a cheap one. "I don't blame you. What shall we do?"

"I shall howl," continued Macgregor. "I can endure this stupidity no longer. These infernal bounds are to last another two weeks."

"Confound it! I know they do. It's a nuisance, isn't it? I thought at the time we were getting off easy."

"So we were, so we were; but that doesn't serve

"Close bounds for active boys were effective punishment"

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

to pass the time. Think of our caves, of the pie-house, of town, of the thousand and one things we might be doing instead of sitting here moping like a couple of owls. Morris says we can get plenty of exercise in the fives courts or in the gym. I loathe exercise. I loathe Morris. I am sick of gym, sick of fives, sick of squash, sick of life, I think. George, old top, what a bauble life is! Prick it, and there's nothing in it. Are you ever happy?"

"Happy?" said Erroll, with a laugh. "Why yes, sometimes I'm quite happy."

Macgregor stared gloomily out of the window. "Lucky dog! It's a restless and miserable spirit, boy, behind this poor thing they call my face. I am consumed with boredom, weariness, fatigue, blues, ennui." Suddenly his eyes brightened and a delicious smile trembled at the corners of his mouth. "I have it! Let's form a society for the prevention of ennui. That will serve me till I dare to call another meeting of the Kappa Up, which, by the by, I'm going to put you up for, if ever again we get together."

"What do you mean?" asked Erroll; "what sort of society?"

"Just you and me and Polly and Pem, Tom, Doug, anybody that's about this rotten afternoon. I have a wonderful idea. Come on, let's have a look into the common-room."

He grabbed his hat and, with Erroll in his wake, sallied forth. They found several of their habitual companions in the form room, most of them having

recently turned up from the afternoon afield. At Macgregor's suggestion they adjourned to Watson's room in Montrose, and he unfolded his plans.

The idea was for Pembroke to confide to Grafton a concocted story of an absorbing love affair which supposedly was to have taken place during the last vacation. "Graf is daffy on girls," Meath explained, "and he'll be tense with excitement. After a day or so, Pem, you'll show him a letter that you have just received from your inamorata, in which she will hold out the hint that she is coming down to stay with some people in Monday Port."

"And who is going to write the letter?" asked Pembroke.

"I'll write any number of letters," replied Macgregor. "Then, by Jove! she'll name a day when she is coming out to school to tea. We will make a bluff that she has been to the Rectory and that Mrs. Forester has commissioned Pem and me to show her about the place. Pem will bring her over to the Old School, and we will have Graf stationed in some convenient place, waiting his chance for an introduction. We'll bring 'em together and let it work."

"Wonderful!" commented Pem, "but, as a mere detail, where are we going to get the girl?"

"Polly will be the girl; he's half girl anyway."

"The deuce I will!" exclaimed Teal with a grin. It need scarcely be said that he had long since been reconciled to his leader.

"Of course you will, that's the principal part of the plan."

"Where will I get the clothes and make-up?"

"I'll write home and get mother to send a lot of things down. Gee whiz! perhaps, with this going I shall preserve my sanity. Here, give me paper and ink and I'll try to put myself into the state of mind of a lovely maiden writing to Pembroke." He seated himself at Ware's desk, and drew writing materials toward him. "Neddy dear, sit down where I can gaze into your lovely eyes and get some inspiration. By jingo, old top, I tell you, you're a winner!"

"What's to be the lady's name?" asked Pembroke, paying no attention to Macgregor's facetious compliments.

"Oh—Helen, any old thing; no, I have it! We'll call her Evelyn Hope. That's the name of a girl in a rotten poem by Browning. Ever read it?"

"No."

"It's of little consequence. Neither has Graf; he'll think it's a lovely name."

They spent the remainder of the afternoon concocting letters to Pembroke from the supposititious Evelyn Hope, who was to be a belle of Coventry. Meath had a friend who lived there whom he could get to mail the letters to the School.

In such fashion the Society for the Prevention of Ennui sprang into existence, and for the time being supplanted the Kappa Upsilon in Macgregor's interest. The joke was carried out with a detail and

success worthy of a better cause. Grafton was completely taken in by the faked letters, and Pembroke found in him a sympathetic recipient of love-sick confidences. By the day Miss Hope was due at the School for tea, Donald had been worked up to the requisite stage of curiosity and excitement.

Polly Teal, who had had several years' experience in assuming feminine rôles in the school play, rigged out in the finery that the indulgent Mrs. Meath had sent upon Macgregor's request, almost did justice to Pem's glowing descriptions.

It was four o'clock of a February afternoon. Grafton was impatiently pacing up and down the terrace before the Old School in order by no mischance to miss the coveted and promised introduction. At last, to his relief, he saw Pembroke and Meath, with a fluffy feminine figure between them, strolling from the direction of the Rectory toward the terrace. In the meanwhile Meath had given the cue to the entire form, so that there was scarcely a window in the front of the Old School from which grinning faces were not watching for the fun.

As Grafton saw his friends advancing he made as if to turn away; but Pem hailed him in tones loud enough for the eavesdroppers to hear. "Hello, Graf, wait a second." He motioned him to join them. "I want to present you to my friend, Miss Hope," he murmured, as Grafton came up.

Donald bowed, but the supposed Miss Hope extended her hand; and, as Grafton took it, she gave

a sudden pressure that momentarily astonished him.

Meath, with a muttered excuse, disappeared around the corner, at which Grafton was relieved; but almost immediately Pembroke also excused himself, and Donald was embarrassed to find himself suddenly standing alone on the terrace with the stately, mysteriously veiled, but doubtless beautiful Evelyn Hope.

"Where have Mr. Meath and Mr. Pembroke gone?" she asked with a simper.

"Really, Miss Hope, I—I haven't the faintest idea. I am sure Pem, at least, will be back in a moment. Won't you——?"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Miss Hope in too audible tones that inflicted torture on the gallant Grafton, "I can't be left alone this way with a strange man. I am frightened. I—I—I am going to cry."

"O Miss Hope!" cried Donald, "I beg of you—don't be frightened—there's nothing to be afraid of—really, I'm—I'm not a very terrifying person. Pem will be back in a second. Perhaps," he concluded wildly, remembering the chances for him who runs away, "you had better wait here a moment while I go after them."

"No, no, no,—don't leave, please! That would frighten me more than anything to be left here alone with all those horrid boys looking out of the windows. I am—*I am going to cry.*"

Glancing up, Donald could see some of the horrid

boys at least; at the same time he heard the threatened sob gathering momentum beneath the veil.

"Oh—please—please don't!" he begged in a hoarse anguished whisper. "I'll take you into the hall. I'll—I'll do anything. Please, please—oh, please!——" He paused breathless, to allow Little Beverly, who was coming up the steps of the terrace, to get past them. Mr. Beverly turned as he entered the Old School and glanced at the pair, as it seemed to Donald, with insufferably rude curiosity.

"Who is that dreadful man?" murmured Miss Hope, checking the impending breakdown.

"Eh—oh, that's one of the masters. I—er—er——"

"Oh, I *am* frightened!" And Polly suddenly gave an excessively feminine shriek and burst into tears.

Poor Donald was helpless. He bent anxiously toward the hysterical maiden, striving to whisper words of reassurance. What a confounded mess he was in! He glanced up again and saw the faces of many of his formmates grinning from the windows above. Nice story there would be going about the school! What on earth was he to do! Oh, Pem, Mac, won't I—but these reflections were interrupted by flashes of gallant concern for the young lady so distressingly there to be comforted.

"Dear Miss Hope, please,—I beg of you——"

Suddenly there was a strangely familiar catch in Evelyn's sobbing.

"What the——!" The exclamation was unfinished even in his mind. He made a dive at Polly, but Teal was too quick for him. He had slipped instantly into the door of the Old School, which Pembroke had promptly slammed in the enraged gallant's face. There was a howl from the galleries. Grafton made another dash at the door, and this time he got inside; but Evelyn Hope and her companions had vanished.

The Society for the Prevention of Ennui was voted a huge success both by the boys who composed it and by the form at large. Polly Teal bore his subsequent punishment, sternly administered in the privacy of their common room after lights, with not more tears than usual.

CHAPTER VIII

WHETSTONE

THE adventure of Evelyn Hope was the first of a series of practical jokes with which Macgregor Meath enlivened the fag end of the winter term. The skating had been spoiled by a January thaw, and though there was cold weather after that, it was not of long enough duration to make good ice. This irritated the boys who were fond of skating, for which the occasional days of good coasting down Deal Hill or the delights of caves in Lovel's Woods did not compensate. The gymnasium was crowded every afternoon, the swimming tank and fives courts were popular, but, in spite of such outlets for superabundant energy, the long periods of bad weather affected the nerves and spirits of the school to a serious degree.

When Meath, for example, was able to work off his energy in hard physical exercise, Deal was a better ordered, better disciplined school than when he could not. In the last analysis the weather was to blame for the series of practical jokes that raged that winter. It seemed to masters that ancient and almost forgotten traditions of another order of things had been revived for their confusion. Meath

was naturally suspected and watched; but, warned by the pie-house episode and its punishment, when his jokes involved a fracture of the laws, he laid and executed his plans with an ingenuity that successfully baffled detection. Most of the jokes were aimed at boys in the upper school, but occasionally masters were the marks, and the pranks were not always as harmless as the one that had worked so admirably upon Donald Grafton. Faculty and prefects conspired to put down the nuisance, but for some time the Society for the Prevention of Ennui pursued its meteoric career unchecked, and when it expired at last it was by a natural death. The Head could not remember when a term had gone so badly; and he also blamed the weather.

But the situation threatened to become intolerable when, in the middle of February, it was complicated by the breaking out of an epidemic of conjunctivitis, an annoying but not serious disease, vulgarly known as pink eye, which spread with extraordinary rapidity, to the demoralization of scholastic work. A dozen severe cases were isolated in the infirmary, but the scores of light cases and the sympathetic "conjunctivites," which included practically the rest of the school, were treated in the dispensary. The weary and overtaxed nurses estimated that in the course of a day they placed over ten thousand drops of argyrol in youthful eyes. For nearly a week almost no study was attempted. Masters lectured during recitation periods after the manner of college professors, and they were put to

it to devise amusements in spare hours. For to add to the difficulties, the community was practically housed by the mountains and deserts of melting snow without. A series of indoor baseball games was played in the gymnasium between the several houses; concerts were given by the musical societies; impromptu debates were held in the school-room under the auspices of the Civics Club; and Stenton, the English master, gave frequent readings from Shakespeare. The irrepressible Macgregor contributed to the diversion of the school in his own modest way. Faculty and prefects, indeed the boys generally, breathed a sigh of relief, almost a sigh of gratitude, when it was announced one morning that Meath had been stricken with an unmistakably severe case of the plague and had been banished to the infirmary dark-room for a fortnight.

As though to celebrate his disappearance from the scene, the most successful event of the pink eye season took place that night in the gymnasium. An "elegant, entertaining and enlightening" vaudeville performance, arranged by Deering and executed entirely by faculty talent, was given before an appreciative audience. Mr. Deering and Mr. Johns, a new master who had won several Y's at New Haven for various athletic achievements, gave an astonishing exhibition of tumbling; Mr. Roylston, laying aside dignity for the first and last time in his career, delivered an original monologue representing a spoiled child on a railway journey in company with

an indulgent mother, which met with wild applause. Mr. Stenton gave a graphic portrayal of the "O my ducats, O my daughter" scene from *The Merchant of Venice,* and Mr. Morris revealed himself as a London coster singer. The evening was crowned by the production of a farce, written by Mr. Deering, entitled *Placing Algy at School,* in which Mr. Williams, a staid elderly master, impersonated Dr. Clearstone, the Head Master of the School of St. Pancras the Boy Martyr; Mr. Gray, in Eton jacket and collar and a little red Deal cap, took the rôle of Algy, and Little Beverly made the hit of his life as Algy's fond mother, Mrs. Puffington Newsance.

But at last the pink eyes cleared to their normal colors, the banished "conjunctivites" were restored to light and society, and the school settled down to work for the examinations, which were to be followed by the fortnight's Easter holiday.

Poor Macgregor had in reality suffered acute tortures with the troublesome disease, and, to his own annoyance and the school's delight, when he reappeared his odd physiognomy was accentuated by a pair of enormous smoked-glass spectacles. There was but one consolation in wearing them, he averred, —he could no longer distinctly see himself in a mirror. But he was unwontedly subdued. His taste for jokes had perished in the darkness, and he even had no wish to revive the Society for the Prevention of Ennui, which was already a fading memory. He cheered his drooping spirits with sweet chocolate

204065B

and promised himself one last effort of the term, a final feast of the Kappa Upsilon, at which he would propose George Erroll for membership.

Throughout the winter he had been faithful to the companionship of his protégé, and the intimacy was now one of the accepted facts of school life. In the unexpressed opinion of the boys, Erroll was making good. He was not popular, he was not intimately known to more than a few of his schoolmates, but as a friend of Meath's he had become familiar to the school. If he shone but in a borrowed glory, he was himself as yet unaware of the fact and had been taking considerable satisfaction in his progress. Next to Meath, but in a very different way, he had come to like Edward Pembroke.

Pembroke was a quiet, serious sort of boy, a good playfellow and a good worker; the normal manly kind of chap that is, after all, the backbone of a school. Beneath his slow manner of speech and slow processes of thought there was a fund of kindly sympathy and a depth of loyalty where he gave his friendship, that Erroll, sensitive to such influences, had detected and appreciated. He had always admired Pembroke from a distance, and then, when his intimacy with Meath brought him frequently into contact with Pem, the admiration had deepened into strong liking. During the pink eye epidemic, when Macgregor was invisible, the two drifted gradually more closely together. There was something in Erroll's personality,—an appeal, a confiding dependence, the evidence of his own strong feeling, per-

haps,—that won from a few a strong and devoted attachment. Pembroke was unconsciously feeling this.

In his company George found himself ready to settle down into quieter, more orderly pursuits,—to long walks afield, to long intimate talks of the thousand and one things that engage the hearts and minds of boys; to the sort of thing, in fact, that Meath had been more and more pulling him out of. He had imitated Meath consistently, joined in his pranks, been keen to evade rules and regulations, bluff masters, and loaf away the long and often dull hours of the winter. But, on the whole, it had been rather a restless, active, distracting term. He had been so preoccupied with his satisfaction at getting what he had so long desired that, until it was nearly over and examinations were looming ahead, he had not found time to appraise its real meaning for himself. As he looked back at it, it seemed he had been missing a good deal out of his life which, with whatever other disagreeable things, had been in it before. Sometimes he thought it was Deering's friendship that he missed, for though he had often been in the master's rooms with the crowd, his absorption in Meath had practically interrupted the friendship with the master which had begun so well and which he had thought was to mean so much. Pembroke was good friends with Deering, he knew; and he envied him. But, as he thought again of making advances, he was conscious of the old shyness inhibiting his will. He imagined that Deering now

would be stand-offiish. He began to fear that he had really never rehabilitated himself in the master's esteem. As a matter of fact, Deering, noticing only that the boy was pulling off from him a bit, had quietly ceased from making efforts to know him better, and supposed that in doing so he was but falling in with Erroll's wishes in the matter. He began foolishly to feel a little self-conscious with Erroll, and was annoyed at doing so.

As the term grew toward a close Pembroke sensed the fact that his new friend was somewhat at odds with the world, but he was not inquisitive. He kept on being friendly, confident that George would straighten out his affairs without interference or suggestion. He put it to himself correctly enough that the boy's head had been a little turned by his dizzy experience with Meath. Pembroke, on the other hand, was rapidly emancipating himself from the power of Macgregor's fascination. He began to realize that his old time leader's domination would not endure as they grew older; and, as for himself, every year, almost every month, he was more and more definitely and deliberately looking forward to serious and worthwhile achievements in the School. He meant to make the baseball team that spring if it were possible; and to win the prize —a valued one in the Fourth Form—for Geometry Originals.

In the fortnight before the examinations his influence succeeded in drawing Erroll back to his classroom work, which George had been almost totally

neglecting since the beginning of the term. The admonitions of masters and frequent detentions had served as mere pin-pricks to remind him of disagreeable duty. But the loafing had been too prolonged and too persistent. Despite his more than average mental ability, Erroll came out of the examinations each day with the painful consciousness of failure. Of all the tests he most acutely feared Mr. Roylston's examination in Cicero's *Orations*. The night before that he broke the rules in order to stay up and study, carefully blanketing doors and windows of his room.

As he came out of the long struggle with the Latin paper, he found a letter from his mother informing him that she found it would be impossible, after all, for her to come to America that year. She sent him a check, told him to be a dear good boy, and do what he thought best during the holidays. For the moment he was too much worried about the result of his examinations to care what happened to him during the vacation, which was to begin in less than a week. And his report was worse even than he had feared.

It was Meath who found him in his room the day the results were announced. It was the twilight of a cloudy March afternoon, and the atmosphere was humid and depressing. Erroll was sitting disconsolate, staring out of his open window over the gray expanse of Deal Water toward Monday Port, which looked for all the world like a little white toy town perched there on the opposite hill.

Macgregor entered without knocking. It was growing dark, so that he had discarded the disfiguring spectacles.

"Why so droopy?" he asked, taking his customary perch on the bed.

"I've enough to make me droopy. Have you heard from your exams?"

"Glory be! I'm still on the invalid list. Didn't have to take any."

"You're lucky."

"I am that. What's the matter? Have you flunked, Georgie?"

"Every rotten thing I took nearly. A puny D in Gumshoe's Cicero is the only thing to my credit."

"Hm," commented Meath, "that is rather droopy, isn't it? What was the trouble? Sympathetic pink eye?"

"No—I've loafed. You ought to know that."

"And why I, pray?"

"Haven't I done most of my loafing with you? You see I'm not as clever as you are. I can't get up a term's work over-night. Nor, on the other hand, am I lucky enough to be on the invalid list."

"Quite right, George, old boy; put it on me. It was all my fault, of course, of course."

"Oh! I don't blame you. It was my own fault all right. I guess you would be in pretty much the same fix, for all your cleverness, if you had had to take 'em."

"I should that. We haven't done much work this term, have we? Rotten term it's been, with that

beastly gating, pink eye, and the rest. But you'll get off your conditions next term without much bother."

"Oh! I'll get 'em off, doubtless; but it's a nice prospect for the spring term, isn't it?"

"Beastly. Me? I wouldn't have pulled even a D in Latin, despite my cleverness."

"I greased on that half the night," said George. "I made up my mind I'd pass *that* if—if——" He suddenly stopped short in the middle of his sentence.

Meath glanced at him with frank curiosity. "Why this affection for the Gumshoe all of a sudden?" he asked.

"I've no special affection for Gumshoe. I was just sick of flunking Latin."

Meath wondered in passing why Erroll had got so red, but George's capacity for blushing was more facile than Macgregor's powers of analysis. "I'm glad you pulled something out of the débâcle," he commented. "We'll pole next term, old chap."

"Next term!" exclaimed George bitterly, "that seems a thousand years away."

"It will pass like a dream in the night. I've never craved vacation so keenly in my life. I couldn't stand it here much longer now, honest! Keeping bounds wore me to a frazzle. Pink eye dissolved me. By the by, where are you going to spend the vacation?"

Erroll smiled oddly. "That reminds me—I haven't the faintest idea. My mother's not coming

over, which rather throws me out. I suppose I'll go to New York and put up at a hotel."

"Rot! Come home with me. No; look at here, I mean it. My people will be delighted to have you. What I want goes at home. I've often taken chaps back for the vacations. Polly's coming for a week."

"By jove, Mac," exclaimed Erroll, "I—I'd be delighted, but——"

"No 'but's'; it's settled. We'll pull out to-morrow, five five. That gets us to Philie in time for dinner."

The solution of the vacation problem was an intense relief. Erroll cheered up a bit for supper. But after the meal was over, and he was wandering along toward the common room with Snuffer Jennings, he suddenly began to feel blue again. Snuffer's serious prattle suddenly depressed him. He felt he couldn't stand about or spend the evening in the futile idle way to which the last night of term seemed dedicated. He was obliged to go to the farewell service in the Chapel, and hated it. The hymns seemed dull and tuneless; such prayers as "Lighten our darkness" and "Give unto thy servants the peace which the world cannot give" were empty and meaningless for him; the Head's brief grave words about the term, not so much of satisfaction as of disappointment, frankly irritated him. Why not, he thought irritably, let the wretched old term be done with and put away?

After chapel, instead of going to the Old School

or Standerland, he set out alone across the campus toward the rocks.

Southward from the school the land sloped gradually from the hilltop and jutted into a point. The shores were rock-bound and precipitous. To the east it overlooked the bay and Strathsey Neck, with Deigr Light in the distance, south to the ocean; westward across another bay and beach to the curving cliffs of Monday Port. At the very point of land a long whaleback-shaped rock, known as Whetstone, an island at high tide, ran at an angle of forty-five degrees straight into the ocean for, perhaps, an eighth of a mile, and, with the rocky shore of the mainland, formed a deep gully or inlet for the sea. In a cleft of the shore rocks the beating of the surf through countless ages had formed a natural ledge or shelf that at low tide was well above the water-line. It was here, in the homesick, Laura-sick days of his first year at Deal, that Erroll had sometimes come, to look with dry hot eyes across the sea toward France, toward England, which were not France and England to him, but home, the only thing that savored of home in his experience, the place where Laura was.

It was to Whetstone that George had directed his steps. Fortunately the tide was on the ebb and his ledge was clear. The rocks were damp and cold, but he had brought along a raincoat, which he spread out on the narrow shelf that served him for a seat. The night was dark, but the air was moist and warm and a fresh breeze was blowing from the southwest.

He could hear the wash of the waves through the gully beneath, hear them slap listlessly against the rocks, and then see the white foam curl to outline the boundaries of the inlet. He could feel the sea all about him. He had never analyzed it, but he had always been conscious of an intense love for the sea. There was something in its infinite expanses, its ceaseless changes, its essential unity, that corresponded to the hidden restless life of his soul.

He leaned back against the rocky shelf and rested his head upon his hand. He was looking into the dark misty southwest and the wind was in his face. He could see the seas, as they creamed over the black nose of Whetstone, spume futilely a moment or so, and then sink into the blackness of the ocean again.

He could not shake off his depression. The sea could not calm him to-night; it was troubled like his spirit. Even the prospect of the vacation with Meath, though it solved his practical problem of where to go and though he realized he would be proud to have the visit known to his schoolmates, did not raise his spirits. His failure in studies, the consciousness of his demoralization (though he did not call it that), the loafing, the slump after his spurt of zeal; following his isolation, his vulgar sin, his impulsive confession of the fall term, all surged up in his consciousness in the damp warm humid night and overwhelmed him. He began to fear that, after all, he had never really emerged from the cowardly shy seclusion of his first years at Deal; the activity, the pranks, games, fooling, loafing of late had been

superficial, had not really released him: he was still held in thrall by the terrors of shyness and loneliness. Since he was doomed to such disappointments, to such miseries, to seeing with such ghastly clearness the vanity and emptiness of life, why did he care, why did he want things so passionately, why did he dream of friends, of popularity, of greatness, power, fame, why did such dizzy wonderful fantastic foolishnesses haunt his thoughts and wring his quivering senses day by day? And, since he did see clearly, why now was he stunned so deeply by disappointment? With Meath's genial comradeship so freshly assured, why was he famishing still for friendship and affection? Now and then he dashed his hands across his eyes to keep back the scalding tears.

He did not know how long he had been there when he heard his name called. He looked up to the path above and could just discern a dark figure standing there. The hail was repeated. It was Pembroke's voice.

"Is that you down there, George?"

"Yes," he called back. "Who's that—Pem?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Can I get down? Do you mind?"

"No; come down. Take that little step there to the left, by the stubby bush. That's right. Sit down now, and slide; but gently. I'll grab your legs and guide you. Good! There's room enough here for both of us."

In a moment Pembroke was seated safely on the ledge by his side, and Erroll was pointing out the advantages and other phenomena of his retreat.

"What the deuce are you up to?" asked Pem.

"I? Nothing. How do you happen to be here?"

"I saw you hike off after chapel. I wanted to see you, so I thought I'd follow. Mind?"

"No, of course not. Glad you came."

"You led me a pretty chase. I'd about given up finding you, when I heard something stir just below where I was standing on the path, and so I called."

They were silent for a moment.

"I'm blamed sorry about your exams," said Ned presently.

"You know, then?"

"Yes, Mac told me."

"Oh, gosh! it's the limit, Pem," exclaimed Erroll. "I've made a mess of things here from the start. I wish I were out of it."

"Don't you like it?"

"I could like it—I could love it. But what's there in it for a chap like me? I just fail, if not in one way, then in another."

"Say, old man, you're down on your luck. Cheer up! Things are bound to go better next term. It's been a rotten term, this. You've always done well enough before; you passed the Latin, and that's the hardest. You'll make it up."

"It isn't merely the exams," persisted Erroll. "That's bad enough, but it's my whole bloomin' cursed self. I just flunk, flunk, flunk; first in one

thing, then in another. If I pass math, it's Latin; if I pass the rotten Latin, I flunk in everything else. If I don't flunk in studies, I flunk in play. It took me nearly two years to get to know a single fellow here, and no sooner do I begin to get in a little bit than everything else seems to go to smash. Listen here! I mean to tell you just what I did last term."

"Sure you want to, George?"

"Dead sure. I've got to. I want you to know just what I am."

He told then in short halting sentences, but in all its naked crudeness, the story of the theft and the subsequent confession and forgiveness. "After that, you know," he continued, "I made good resolutions, and for a while I kept them. The thought of Deering's believing in me helped a lot. Then Meath took me up, and things seemed to be sailing along as I'd always wanted 'em to; I felt I was on the top of the wave. Now come these blamed exams, and I wake up and look back and realize the rotten way I've loafed and not given a hang . . . Then my mother writes and tells me she can't get over, and, of course, that means that Laura—that I won't see her. I couldn't stand it around school to-night. I had to get off alone. I know you think I am a fool, and I am; but I don't seem to know how to help being one. I only know that I'm darn sore and sick of it all."

"I guess I know how you feel," said Pem.

"How can you know, Ned? You're as different from me as day is from night. You couldn't do the things I've done; it isn't in you. You couldn't let things go to the deuce as I do, and then come to and have to try and pull yourself together. And if you did, you wouldn't go off and bawl like a kid about it."

"Maybe we are different, George. But I guess I know how you feel."

As he spoke he put his arm about the boy's shoulders and drew him closer to his side. Instinctively, and without embarrassment, their hands clasped. "I can't help what you've done, old man; but I like you all the better for blurting out about it."

It was the first time in his life that any one, save his mother and Laura, had touched Erroll in any way that savored of affection, of a caress. A bolt shot back somewhere in his breast, and a lost pulse of feeling stirred again. The feeling of that cool confident hand in his and that friendly arm about his shoulders was as oil and balm to the wounds of his spirit and his heart.

"I wanted to see you," continued Pembroke quietly, "to ask if you wouldn't come home with me for the holidays?"

Erroll felt a keen pang of regret. "I can't," he answered a little hoarsely. "I promised Mac to go home with him. I wish I could."

"Confound Mac!" exclaimed Pembroke; "he always gets ahead of me. I'm sorry; I wish you

could. You must some time. But we'll make up for it next term."

The tension was broken. They talked on a while till the distant bell warned them of the hour, when they started for the School to pack and get ready for bed.

CHAPTER IX

EASTER TERM

With regard to the vacation Erroll was of two minds: he would rather—much rather, especially after the night at Whetstone—have gone home with Pembroke, but he was still proud of Meath's patronage and he valued the public and emphatic seal this visit would set upon their intimacy. Despite the reaction against Meath's demoralizing influence, expressed so tempestuously to Pembroke, he enjoyed Macgregor's companionship, and knew that he could feel assured of a good time during his visit.

Meath lived in Philadelphia. His parents were wealthy, easy-going people of the world; not precisely the sort to whom George instinctively assigned a social value, and his sense of social values, sharpened by witnessing his mother's long contest with the world, was not dull. Macgregor's precocious qualities had been admired and indulged at home. As he expressed it, what he said there went. He chose his own amusements without criticism or opposition. The father was absorbed in his business affairs; the mother was the doting type to whom it had simply never occurred to deny her only child anything that he wanted. An innate common sense

and the discipline of school acted as correctives that so far had checked the dangerous consequences that are supposed to follow such home influences.

It was not in any sense a vicious vacation for the two boys, but it was demoralizing. They went out every night to theaters, dances, parties of one sort or another; they slept half or all of the mornings; and spent the afternoons whirling about in motor cars, going to matinées, automobile shows; enjoying, in fact, whatever diversions the city afforded. They smoked endless quantities of cigarettes and overate to a degree that should have ruined both their digestions. Both thought they were having a "corking" time; and Mrs. Meath smiled upon them her bright indulgent absolution and benediction. She considered a thousand cigarettes smoked before her eyes preferable to one whiff stolen behind her back; indeed, she rather admired the odd little air of being a man of the world that smoking gave Macgregor.

Erroll did not altogether like Meath's friends. He thought them a little bad form. They were jolly, easy-going, amusing; the girls to whom he was introduced flirted outrageously, but they were strikingly pretty, most of them, and undeniably good fun. He was not quite facile in feminine society, though he found it rather agreeable. Macgregor was distinctly proud of his success, for it seemed to him that Erroll had never appeared to better advantage. He was quite extraordinarily good-looking; he knew how to dress and how to carry him-

self; the ease and grace of his good manners more than off-set his incorrigible shyness.

During the second and last week of the vacation Polly Teal joined them, and a fresh round of gaieties was inaugurated in his honor, but it proved too much for Macgregor. Debilitated as he had been by his long confinement during the pink eye epidemic, he spent the last few days of the vacation in bed, suffering acute agonies with an attack of indigestion. Polly cut his visit short, and George, at last, had to return to Deal alone.

Erroll felt a distinctly bad taste in his mouth as a result of his visit. Macgregor was a wonder at school, but at home his halo looked a little dim. Erroll's standard of conduct was not of a particularly superior kind, so it was not so much the Meaths' failure to measure up to lofty ideals, for which in retrospect he criticized them, as for a certain lack of taste,—almost, it might be said, of refinement. He could remember vividly enough numerous incidents in the career of his mother that probably would have genuinely shocked Mrs. Meath, but his mother had charm, grace, the most exquisite taste, the most unerring sense of the beautiful. A good deal of all of this he put into definite words to himself, for his powers of analysis were growing keener, whatever might be said of his capacity for judgment. Of course, he should never make these criticisms openly, not even to Ned.

During these reflections, for which Erroll was taking increasing credit to himself on the journey

from Philadelphia to Coventry, he was consuming cigarettes at a rate that caused several men in the smoking compartment of the Pullman to look at him more than once in a way, if he had chanced to notice it, that he would not have regarded as flattering. But he was absorbed by his own thoughts or with inward comments upon the stupidity of the country through which the train was rushing. He knew perfectly well that the School's strict prohibition against smoking was not relaxed during vacation, but he considered, sincerely enough, that the School's jurisdiction was vacated once a boy was out of Monday Port. Nothing ever had happened to boys who smoked in holidays. Danger of detection and punishment would have been the only motive that would have deterred him. His mother had permitted it, though with protest: obviously it was a matter with which the School had nothing to do.

At Coventry he changed into a local train for the coast; and he took a seat, as was his custom, in the smoking-car, and immediately lighted a fresh cigarette. The next stop was Kingsbridge Junction. Erroll, like many boys who expected to go to Harvard, affected to consider Kingsbridge College an overgrown preparatory school, so that he scarcely took the trouble to look at the line of splendid white towers that rose above the westward horizon. Somewhat disdainfully he flecked the ashes from the end of his cigarette and glanced cursorily over the head-lines of the New York paper on his knee.

Suddenly he was startled to feel a hand laid upon his shoulder, and a friendly voice exclaiming in his ear, "Hello, George; room for me?"

He jumped up, coloring furiously, and took hold of Deering's extended hand.

"Certainly, sir," he replied after an instant's embarrassed hesitation. He pushed his coat over and made room for the master, at the same time dropping the cigarette to the floor and placing his foot upon it.

Deering took the vacant seat by the boy's side. "What sort of vacation have you had?" he asked.

"Oh! corking, sir. I've been staying with Meath in Philadelphia."

"Ah! and where is Mac?"

"Laid up with indigestion. He'll be coming down to-morrow or next day."

"Too much good time?"

"I suppose so."

Deering took his pipe from his pocket and lighted it. There was a silence for several moments. Then a strange and irrational impulse took possession of Erroll. He wanted to know if Deering had seen him smoking; he also wanted to know what Deering thought of it, if he had seen him. It occurred to him that the master might report him to the Head, but, on the whole, he put that fear aside as an improbability. As he spoke aloud, within he called himself a fool,—"Do you mind my smoking, sir?"

Deering turned rather sharply. There was an

expression on his face that George had never seen there before. "You know it is forbidden," he replied shortly.

"Yes, of course, I know it is at school; but practically all of the upper school fellows smoke in vacation."

"Doubtless many do," admitted Deering.

"Do you think it is wrong?" persisted Erroll.

"I think smoking for boys before they enter college is most undesirable. I know that the rule against smoking cannot be enforced in vacation, but as long as it exists it strikes me as rather impertinent that you should ask if you may smoke with me."

"I didn't mean to ask if I might smoke with you, but if you minded it."

"Well, if I didn't mind, you would have continued smoking, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so—yes, sir."

"That is why it struck me as impertinent."

For some time neither of them spoke again. Erroll felt uncomfortable and annoyed by the master's use of the word "impertinent." He had no desire to reopen the conversation, but if he had wished to do so, he would have found nothing to say. Deering was also annoyed, and, he felt, out of proportion to the offense. A number of things crossed his mind, but he did not succeed in saying them. He realized, suddenly, that, if he did not particularly care for George Erroll, the whole situation would be dismissed with a short sharp bit of admonition and ad-

vice, and he felt mortified that he was not dealing with the boy in such fashion. It was several minutes after his last remark that he turned again to Erroll.

"I have just one thing to say to you, my boy, and that is that I should think you would have learned to appreciate a little the importance of self-restraint, that you would show less disposition to self-indulgence."

Erroll flushed deeply. He made no reply, but kept his eyes fixed on the swift-flying scene, which, however, he did not see.

After a time Deering began to speak of school affairs and Erroll replied courteously. But it was a difficult constrained conversation, and both were relieved when the train stopped at last at Monday Port. There were a number of boys and one or two masters in the other car, so that the "barge," which was to carry them out to the school, was quite filled, and Erroll easily managed to find a seat separated from Mr. Deering. It was a noisy merry lot, ostensibly grumpy at the idea of getting back, but, in reality, keen with anticipation for the spring term. By the time they turned into the great driveway that led through a stately avenue of elms to the Old School, the spirit of the school had taken possession of them once more.

It was a fine bright day. By a miracle of nature heavy rains had washed and strong winds had swept the country clear of all traces of winter. There was a mellow good humor in the mounting sun; the

sea was serene and calm, save that along the ochre line of the great sweeping beach that curved to Strathsey Neck little waves lapped the shore. It was so unwontedly still, this clear April afternoon, that from the school terrace each separate wave could be distinguished as it combed and broke upon the sands. Even the blades of grass on the playing field seemed to have lifted up their heads and to be taking color and life from the warmth of the sun. It was as if the weather had repented of the horrid way it had acted during the long winter and was promising to do its very best now to make up.

Spring, indeed, with its new and varied activities, was to come with a rush. Masters were to look back for years afterward and recall that Easter term as blessed with the earliest warmest spring they could remember on the Cæsarean coast. Even those early April days were hot. Crocuses and tulips were a-riot on the terrace beds, and the impertinent dandelion so plentifully dotted the playing fields that it was hard to tell, at first glance, whether the prevailing color were green or yellow. Mr. Williams, ageing but indefatigable healer and coach of water sports, led his cohorts to the boat house on the Third Beach on the far side of the Neck, and started the house crews at practice. Not an afternoon but a dozen shells were on the river. Some of the boys had sailboats also and a score or more were owners of canoes, which had stuck their noses into every cove along the shores of Strathsey for five miles up the river, and had threaded their

way through every creek and water trail with which the wide marshes were interlaced.

The Anglomaniacs, a small but zealous band, inspired by Mr. Beverly, were playing cricket on the south field. Cricket was a game that was quite unreasonably derided at Deal and was often played under considerable difficulties. Frequently, after baseball practice, when the Anglomaniacs were still bowling and batting on the green south field, scores of baseball players and fans would take up positions on the side lines and chaff the cricketers unmercifully.

Meath, restored to health and more freckled than ever by the hot spring sun, patronized cricket because he came from Philadelphia. Erroll, who had learned to play at the school at Sussex, came out and tried for the eleven, because Meath had made him promise that he would. Others played because they liked the game, or were duffers at baseball, or for obscure reasons wished to please Mr. Beverly.

But the heart of the school was in baseball. In the Easter term the school nine was beyond all dispute the institution of supreme importance, only eclipsed by the transcendental reverence inspired by the football team in the fall. The captain, Henry Whitmore, affectionately known as Hank, was unquestionably the most important personage at Deal; in reality if not in theory, the school gave him precedence over Doctor Forester and Jack Randall, the Head Prefect. A word from Whitmore to the aver-

age boy was an event of the week, sometimes of the season. He was a pitcher by grace as well as nature and had never been known to lose a game. Boxford hopes were but bubbles on the sea of desire as long as Whitmore pitched for Deal. He was entering Kingsbridge in September, a frightful loss to the school; but Dealonians, without any effort of the imagination, could already picture him doing unto Harvard and Yale what had already been done unto Boxford.

Erroll found it difficult to be keen for cricket; partly because he was urged by Pembroke, a promising candidate for the school nine, partly because he intensely disliked the ragging to which the cricketers were so frequently subjected. Besides, his *bona fide* experiences (doubtless not typical) with the English game had preserved him from becoming an Anglomaniac, and he resented the fact that he was classed as one. Little Beverly affected a very broad *a* and a rising inflection that irritated George every time he heard it. Erroll had carefully and thoroughly executed the English accent with which, when he first came to Deal, he had himself been afflicted.

With the fine weather and consequent outdoor life the school speedily reëstablished its habitual morale. As all of the Insufferable Six, except Polly Teal, were in training for some sport or other, there had been no Kappa Upsilon feasts since the end of the last term. On that occasion Meath had put George Erroll up for membership in the society,

but he had been blackballed by Grafton. Meath was annoyed, but he was too weary and the term was too nearly over for him to do anything but temporarily accept defeat for his candidate with what grace he could. Occasional meetings of the society were held, but, as no club feast could be given until after the Boxford game, for the time being interest in the Kappa Upsilon was at a low ebb.

Erroll continued to associate intimately with Macgregor Meath, but his emotional interest had been transferred to Edward Pembroke. As soon as he was thrown with Ned once more, he felt with renewed force the fascination this new friend had always, more or less, had for him. Thought of Pem frequently preoccupied him. He dreamed of him at night and when he was at his books, for he was working now; and always he pictured to himself the slow but positive dawning of a perfect friendship between them, such a friendship as all his life he had been longing for. He was quite thrilled one morning at prayers when the Head read the account of the friendship of David and Jonathan from the Second Book of Samuel. "His love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." George repeated the words over and over to himself, and surreptitiously made a pencil mark on the margin of his Bible where they occurred. He dreamed that it might be so between Pembroke and him . . . And with his warm and generous affection he felt sincere admiration for his friend. Ned, it seemed to

him, was all that he was not—steady, simple, kindly, reliable, able, generous, and unselfish . . .

It happened that Pembroke's strenuous work on the baseball squad and his diligent poling for the daily recitations left them comparatively little time for the leisurely companionship in which such friendships thrive.

The first Sunday night after their return Pem proposed a walk up the beach. It was a pleasant balmy starlit night, with soft winds blowing. They chatted along for a while of their holidays, of their common interests at school . . .

Suddenly Pembroke spoke in a more serious tone. "We've been back nearly a week now. I've been hoping you'd come back out for baseball despite what you said, but I see you're going to play cricket."

"I promised Mac," Erroll replied, and regretted his precipitancy.

"I am awfully sorry. I feel pretty sure that you would make good at baseball. It's the only game here, if you don't go out for the crew. I've nothing to say against cricket in itself, for I really don't know anything about it; but it seems to me it's a sort of affectation for us to try to play it. Nobody gives a hang for it except the Maniacs and Little Bev. He's the craziest of the lot. Mac took it up because he comes from Philadelphia and thinks it shows loyalty to his native town to play it. Besides, Mac always wants to be doing something that

the majority hate. I don't believe he cares a continental darn for cricket."

"He can't play certainly," said Erroll. "We are a lot of duffers at it, every one of us."

"Well, what's the use, then? You'd have a chance to make the squad if you came out for baseball, and I've a hunch you might eventually make the team. And I tell you what! the School needs every bit of material it can get to work into shape for next year. Do you realize it, we are going to lose Hank and Colly Pursley and Tim Corson and Billy Metcalf? We've got to scare up some new material, and Hank's worried about it, I know. I should think, after Jack Stenton's talk in the schoolroom and Hank's in the Dealonian meeting, that you'd come out and try."

"I'd like to, I swear I should," said Erroll, "but it would make Beverly and Mac confoundedly sore."

"Oh! that for Beverly!" He snapped his fingers. "What does he amount to? He has never taken the slightest interest in a single sport except cricket; and that's not because cricket is a sport, but because it's English. I wouldn't encourage him in his asininity by going out and playing with him."

"Of course I don't give a hang for Beverly," agreed Erroll; "but there's Mac."

"Darn Mac! honestly, George, I'm getting rather sick of Mac. He hasn't, when you come down to it, enough school spirit in his whole organism to fit out a mosquito. He is always on the wrong side, always opposing what the most of us want. He cusses

out baseball and football and goes out and makes a muff at cricket from pure cussedness. I think you are a fool to take your cue from Mac."

"But I promised, Ned; how can I go back on my word?"

"You promised to go out for it. Well, you have gone out for it. You want to play baseball and the School needs every fellow to help it out, for next year if not for this. Baseball counts a lot for the School, and cricket is only a joke. It seems to me that you owe more to the School than you do to Mac."

"I owe a lot to Mac," said Erroll, with a sense of being virtuously loyal.

Pembroke turned on him. "I guess you don't realize just what you do owe to Mac. I'm beginning—but there! we are both friends of his, so we won't get on to that. Seriously, I think it is your duty to go to Mac, explain things, and come out for baseball, whether he thinks you are a quitter or not. I will do anything I can to help you get on to the game, knock out, pass, and all that. We can do a lot together at odd times. And then, though this really has nothing to do with it, we would be together a great deal more, and I'd like that. As it is, there will be precious little chance for us to see each other at all."

Erroll thrilled to his finger tips. That had a lot to do with it for him.

"I will talk to Mac. Much as I'd like to chuck

the cricket though, I can't decide now; I must see how he takes it."

Pembroke urged him no further, and during the rest of their walk to the Point and back they talked pleasantly and happily enough of other things.

The next day was Monday, another of the warm and cloudless days that were making that April a golden month indeed. Baseball practice on the north field ended at five. On this afternoon a half dozen or more of the first squad drifted round to the cricket field before the Old School, and stood idly watching and chaffing the cricketers. The horsing was milder than usual, for among the onlookers was Captain Whitmore, whose exalted dignity imposed a certain restraint. It was his presence, indeed, though he had not joined in the ragging, that affected Little Beverly's nerves. He was quite an unusual muff at bowling and at the bat he accidentally knocked down the wickets three times in succession. Meath strolled nonchalantly in from the field.

"I say, Mr. Beverly," he drawled; "let's call it off this afternoon, shall we? We can give another exhibition to-morrow after secret practice."

Beverly gave a mortified laugh, but he welcomed any excuse to escape. The cricketers, with unanimous consent, left the game in mid-air.

Meath, with his arm linked in Erroll's, was strolling off the field in the direction of showers and tea. Mr. Beverly served tea to the eleven after practice. Captain Whitmore, still standing at the edge of the

field, had not so much as smiled at the exchange of repartee between the ball players and the Anglomaniacs, but, as Meath and Erroll passed within a dozen yards or so of him, he turned suddenly. "Eh —you Fourth Former, there! No, not you, Meath, —the chap with you—what's his name?—Erroll. Erroll, I want to speak to you."

George, startled by this command, instantly left Macgregor and came trotting up to the great captain. It was the first time in his life that Whitmore had condescended to address him. He stopped before him, waited expectantly, with the air of holding his cap in his hand.

"What are you playing this fool game for?" Whitmore demanded sternly.

"I—I—don't quite know, sir."

"Shouldn't think you would. None of you can play it. Get out and try for the squad."

"Eh—who—I, sir?" gasped George.

"Yes, you."

"Is there a chance, sir?"

"Of course there's a chance, you ass, or I wouldn't tell you to come out. You report to me to-morrow on the north field at two-forty sharp. I want to see what you've got in you. Understand?"

"Yes, sir; but—but—I—I—I've played ball mighty little. I——"

"I will find out soon enough whether you're any good. Just do as I tell you."

"Of course; yes, sir—but, Mr. Beverly——"

"I'll speak to Beverly. Who is the captain of this insane aggregation?"

"Macgregor Meath."

"Tell Meath that I want to see him to-night directly after chapel. Remember, two-forty sharp to-morrow."

Whitmore turned on his heel and strolled off with Colly Pursley, first baseman of the nine, second only to the transcendental Hank in the admiration of the school.

"Why all this fuss?" inquired Pursley idly, as they moved grandly away, leaving Erroll a dwindling speck on the horizon.

"That little fool's got baseball in him," responded Whitmore. "Heck with this cricket! Just spoils good ball players."

"It's Little Bev that keeps it going."

"Beverly is an ass," commented Hank; "hopeless! If they could play the bally game,—but they can't! We'll give that kid a chance. Pembroke's keen on it, and Pembroke's got a good head-piece. He'll help the beggar out."

"Gosh! they'll all need being helped out when we're gone."

"Well, rather."

CHAPTER X

TRIED OUT

ERROLL scraped together a baseball outfit that night for his début on the following afternoon. It did not occur to him to disobey Whitmore's command; nevertheless, it would be a disagreeable task —telling Meath. He did it, however, after prayers.

"Say, Mac," he said, joining Meath, "Hank Whitmore told me to tell you that he wanted to see you at his room directly after Chapel."

"You don't say?" exclaimed Macgregor. "What's up? Does he want me to go out for his bloomin' baseball team?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. Fact is——"

"He wants you, eh? You've no talent for finesse, little one."

"Well,—yes."

"And of course you are going?"

"How can I help it? Wouldn't you, if Whitmore told you to?"

"Despite my previous remark, old chap, I can't imagine that situation arisin'. I suppose *you* can't help it. Spunk, my boy, like finesse, is not your particular strength."

"What's spunk got to do with it? Seems to me it's a good deal more a matter of spirit."

"Ah! Georgie, what a docile pupil you have become. Close my eyes, and I seem to hear the firm accents and noble diction of Edward Pembroke. Point is, do you *want* to chuck the cricket?"

"No——"

"Don't lie."

"I'm not. If——"

"I know, I know," Meath hastily interrupted. "Why should you admit it with so excellent an excuse? Sheer folly, unworthy of a chap of average intelligence. If you don't go out, you'll queer yourself with the Grand Panjandrum Hink Hank Twittermore. Of course, of course, you'll go. In the meantime I'll give his Royal Highness the opportunity he craves of telling me why he wants you. So long." He turned away, whistling a bar or so of the *Wearing o' the Green.*

Erroll stood where he was for the moment, ill at ease and resentful at Meath's snippy accusations. Macgregor had gone but a few yards when he turned back and joined Erroll again. He placed both hands on his friend's shoulders and looked him directly in the eyes.

"See here, George, I beg your pardon for what I said. I know it cut you. I was nettled—I blurted it out without thinking. You had promised to play cricket—but I know you'd rather go out for baseball. I don't blame you. You'd be more than a

fool if you didn't go when Hank himself has taken the trouble to ask you."

"Thank you, Mac," exclaimed Erroll gratefully. "It's darn white of you to take it this way. I do hate to throw cricket over, for your sake, anyway."

"Don't bother about that," said Meath with a laugh; "only don't throw me over with cricket. I —I—well, I confess, little one, that'd grieve me more than I'll try to say."

"Throw you over!" cried Erroll with surprise, for the idea was novel and incredible. "Why, Mac, you've done more for me than any fellow in school. You saved my life last term. If——"

"Thanks, thanks," said Meath. "We'll hang together just the same?"

"Why, of course, we shall."

"All right, then," rejoined Meath blithely. "I'm off to serve as bootscraper to the glorious Whitmore. Come canoeing with me to-morrow after practice."

"Bully. I'd like to."

This conversation appeased Erroll's lingering qualms. He felt free now to throw himself into baseball with all his might. His heart warmed toward the generous Macgregor afresh for making the way so easy for him, as Macgregor doubtless had realized it would.

The next day he reported to Captain Whitmore promptly at forty minutes past two. Whitmore nodded and then ignored him for fifteen minutes or so. At last he bade him gruffly to get out into

the field and catch flies. Erroll worked as he had never worked in his life before, and, considering that he was a good deal of a greenhorn, his performance was not discreditable. Pembroke's "Keep it up; you're showing great form" was as music in his ears. In the batting and infield practice he did not show to such advantage, for here the habit of the game counted for more. But he threw such ardor, such determination into every movement, that Whitmore, whom nothing that happened on the baseball field escaped, was impressed decidedly favorably.

"Think you were right about that Fourth Form friend of yours," he commented briefly to Ned Pembroke after the first day's practice.

Practice had ended before five o'clock, so that there was a good hour and a half before supper. Pembroke proposed to Erroll that they spend it in extra work. "I'll knock out to you," he said.

"I'm sorry," George answered, "but I'm dead tired, Pem; besides I promised to go canoeing with Mac."

"Oh, Mac!" exclaimed Pembroke petulantly. "If you expect to do anything at baseball, you've got to make up your mind to give a lot of time to it."

Erroll was eager to break his engagement, but he could see Meath waiting for him at the head of the path that led down the hill to the marshes. There was nothing for it—he ran across the field and joined him.

The canoeing was pleasant enough, but when

Meath proposed, at the end of the excursion, that they should frequently run down for the hour after practice, George promptly exclaimed, "I'd like to, but I can't do it, Mac. I need all the time I can get for ball. I'll go with you any Monday afternoon when there's no practice, but I can't other times." And Meath was obliged to be content.

The season went on apace, and save for occasional showers, which obligingly fell at night, the weather held fair. Pembroke was obviously making his place in the field secure, and was playing in the minor games that were held nearly every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon. Twice or thrice the squad was weeded out; but each time, to his intense relief, Erroll found that his name was not among those who were given the *congé*. He threw himself into the game with all the ardor and enthusiasm of his nature, and every day spent the hour from five to six at extra practice with Pembroke, a custom that Whitmore noted with inward approval. Twice already by the middle of May he had put Erroll into the game during the last inning. The boy was developing rapidly into a sure and swift fielder, but his progress at the bat was less satisfactory. This was largely due, as he himself realized, to the fact that during the first few weeks he never faced the pitcher without an absurd, unreasonable, humiliating spasm of sheer physical fear. Only the most experienced coach would have noticed this, for ostensibly Erroll was eager for his chance at the plate. But he would grip the bat a little too resolutely, with

somewhat too grim a determination, and as a result of nervousness he would swing viciously at almost every ball pitched him, and usually fan the air. Whitmore in the box played with him as a master does with a puppy. Hank knew what was the trouble; and though the improvement was slow, he was experienced enough to realize that such determination, intelligently directed, was bound to achieve its purpose.

"Take it slower; take it slower," he would admonish; "watch the ball. Don't strike at everything!"

Gradually Erroll acquired confidence. He began to be able to guess whether the ball would go directly over the plate and was less prone to strike wildly at curves. Whitmore had observed from the first that an inside curve invariably caused him to start back, instantly recover himself, and strike wildly at the air. He strolled down from the pitcher's box one afternoon quite close to Erroll at home plate.

"See here," he said in low tones, "don't let those in-curves fool you. Hug your plate. Let the ball hit you. It's the pitcher's fault if it does; and you get a base. See?"

Erroll stood up manfully after that, with mouth tightly set. "All right," he said grimly to himself. "I won't budge if the darn ball knocks a hole in my ribs." The skillful Whitmore pitched him in-curves for fifteen minutes. A dozen times they grazed the boy's jersey. To be sure he hit only one, but better,

he succeeded in not trying to hit them all. Hank, however, was not satisfied until he had planted a fairly swift ball frankly in the batsman's side. Erroll took it without a quiver and trotted off to first base. His side hurt, but, after all, that was a detail. Whitmore had him back, and pitched to him until he had whacked out half a dozen straight balls into deep field.

"All right," he said at last, "get out now and see what you can do in right field. You stood up to the ball for the first time to-day. Keep on, and you'll learn to bat yet."

Erroll kept on. In the ninth inning of the game with the Coventry High School he made a clean hit over the second baseman's head and brought in a run. For the first time in his life he heard the rippling triple cheer from the boys on the bleachers, with his own name tacked on to the end of it. He somewhat spoiled the spectacular effect of his hit by being put out at third on the next play. But Deal was ahead by a comfortable score, and, as they trotted out to give the visitors their final chance at the bat, Whitmore was actually gracious to the cub fielder.

By mid-May, though there was but the remotest chance that Erroll would be called to substitute in any important game, he had practically secured a place in the final squad. There was the unlikely, dazzling possibility that something might happen, some concatenation of circumstances might take place, by which he would be put in at the tail-end of

the Boxford game and so win his D the very first season. But it was too fantastic, too incredible an achievement for him to do more than dream of it in most unguarded moments of meditation. He and Pembroke were the only two members of their form who had kept their places on the squad. It was due to Pembroke's indefatigable coaching and help that Erroll had made such progress, and it was a pleasure to be indebted to this kindly, loyal and fascinating friend.

On Mondays, as he had promised, when there was no practice, he had gone canoeing unfailingly with Macgregor Meath. And these long afternoons in the bright May weather were a pleasure, almost a relief, after the strenuous week's work on the diamond. Cricket was still played, but the school had lost interest in it so completely that they did not even take the trouble to chaff the Anglomaniacs.

Meath kept his canoe moored near the shore at the south end of Beaver Pond, and their favorite course would lie up the Pond itself under the lee of Lovel's Woods, or, by carrying over the bank, along one of the little water trails that threaded the marshes and eventually emptied into Beaver creek. Sometimes they would carry a quarter of a mile to one of the streams that flowed eastward into the Strathsey river at the Third beach, and from that point they would paddle up the Passage, working in and out of the many little coves and inlets with which the west shore of the Strathsey was abundantly pierced.

Meath, who despised training, usually brought along a sufficient supply of stores to provide an ample repast. He ate it alone mostly, for George rarely indulged beyond taking a bit of chocolate and munching a biscuit or so. He was rather annoyed that Macgregor unblushingly smoked on these occasions. It was not the first time that Meath had smoked at school; but, beyond taking a puff occasionally from his friend's cigarette, Erroll had not yielded to the temptation. He had found it hard at first to give up smoking after the Easter vacation; but the baseball and its rigid demands in the matter of training made it easier. He had never considered smoking from the ethical point of view of loyalty to the School, but he not smoked chiefly because most of the fellows did not do it, and because, for some reason or other, Macgregor had never particularly tempted him to do so.

One afternoon in late May they started from the School about half-past two o'clock. It was one of the warmest days of the year. Meath, as usual, was supplied with edibles, reading matter, and smoking material. Erroll had slipped a volume of poetry into his pocket, for they were fond of reading in some quiet nook on these Monday afternoons. He was a little ashamed of liking verse, but in Meath he found a sympathetic companion. Macgregor devoured any book that came his way with little discrimination, but with a strong preference, it may be said, for exciting fiction.

"It's too hot to hang about the marshes this after-

noon," said Mac, as he pulled the canoe to shore; "let's carry over to Third Beach creek and go up the river to Castle Rock cove."

"I'm game. Don't care where we go. The marshes are full of filthy bugs."

They lifted the canoe over the high bank of the Pond, carried it down on the other side for a dozen rods or so, and launched it on the bosom of a little brook that was just wide enough to carry it. They pushed along by thrusting their paddles against the banks or in the swampy reed-grass, till they got into the wider waters of Beaver creek. After paddling down this stream for a quarter of a mile they turned up another brook to the east. Then came the long carry across the marshes to Third Beach creek, whence there was clear passage to the river.

The afternoon sun was hot and only a lazy south breeze was stirring, faintly rippling the waters but affording little relief from the heat. Each took turns paddling, while the other lay in the bottom of the canoe trailing hands and sometimes bare feet over the gunwales in the cool salt current of the Strathsey. At last they turned into a broad but shallow cove, the entrance to which was screened by a great pile of boulders known as Castle Rock. Within the cove the shadows were deep, the swell was gentle, and they were shut in by high cliffs, for Castle Rock cove was in the shape of a triangle, the Rock itself forming the base.

They moored the canoe to a jutting ledge, and stretched themselves out at either end of it, luxuri-

ating in the ample shade after their heating exercise in the sun. Meath tossed some biscuit and a bar of chocolate to his companion, and both pulled the books from the pockets of their coats, and began to read. George had lately discovered Lord Byron for the first time, and was as keenly affected by the sensuous musical verse as the traditional early-Victorian youth was ever supposed to be in a by-gone age. Meath had read *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* with his own precocious appreciation, and had commended the latter poem to Erroll. For himself that afternoon he perused a volume of short stories which it is not probable he had borrowed from the school library. As he read rapidly and with deep enthrallment, he smoked cigarettes with unctuous enjoyment.

It was deliciously cool now. Erroll, always sensitive to the influence of nature, yielded his senses to the delightful, languorous beauty of the afternoon. He felt with a thrill of pleasure the little puffs of the south wind that came now and then around the jagged corners of the Rock, and his mind and imagination were pleasantly absorbed by the rhythmic music and vivid imagery of the poet. One hand he dipped idly in the cool translucent water. There was no surf, and they could look down to the bottom of the cove but two or three feet below upon the curious, intricate submarine world of seaweed, rock and fine white sand. Funny little crabs would poke their noses out, only to scurry back to cover when the canoe swayed ever so gently.

Myriads of whitebait swarmed about the keel for the crumbs that Macgregor kept dropping over the side. Occasionally a crusty old lobster toddled across the pool.

Every now and then George would get a whiff of cigarette smoke, as Meath exhaled with long breaths of satisfaction. It was as the aroma of an intoxicating perfume, as the fumes of a beloved narcotic to its devotee. For the first time he felt a keen sharp physical desire to feel the smoke of a cigarette in his throat, to experience the fascinating dizziness that comes with a deep inhalation after long abstinence.

"Look at here, Mac," he exclaimed suddenly, "give me a drag, will you?"

"Sure thing," replied the obliging Macgregor. He flecked the ashes off his cigarette and, leaning over, passed it up to George in the bow.

Erroll took the little paper roll of tobacco, put it between his lips, and drew in the smoke,—all his mouth and throat would contain,—and passed the cigarette back to Macgregor. He leaned back and slowly breathed it out.

"Gosh! that's good!" he exclaimed, with a sigh of gratification.

"Of course it's good. Have one?"

"No, thanks."

"Absolutely safe."

"I dare say, but I can't break training."

Macgregor smiled tolerantly, admitting the existence of scruples with which he had no sympathy.

Both boys had let their books slip to the bottom of the canoe.

"You seem to be making good on the squad," remarked Meath idly.

"I don't know. I've done better than I expected. It was darn white of you not to kick about my dropping cricket."

"Oh," murmured Macgregor, "I've learned not to buck against enthusiasms. I saw how the land lay, and when Hank——"

"I couldn't refuse."

"Of course you couldn't."

"I say,—let's have another drag."

"Cert. Have a dozen."

He passed the cigarette again, and this time Erroll took two deep inhalations.

"By the by," Meath continued, reaching back for the cigarette, "what's happened between you and Deering this term? You've scarcely been near him."

"I've been busy," Erroll answered with a flush.

"What's up? Don't you like him?"

"Yes, I have always liked him; I always will."

"What's the matter then?"

"Nothing, really; I got sore at something he said —a trifle; it's over. I haven't meant to keep out of his way; just have—that's all."

"Why do you like him so particularly?"

"I don't know. Why do you?"

"Oh, he's good company, friendly, and all that sort of thing. Chiefly, I suppose, because he finds

me amusing. Then he has been so darned decent—never poking about after lights; not supercilious like the beloved Bill. Pah! the beloved Bill bores me to extinction! Deering hasn't forgotten how it feels to be a boy; he'd help a chap out."

"That he would," said Erroll. "Though I don't agree with you about Morris," he added quickly; "he's white."

"Dull gray, Georgie, dull gray. Being 'white' means making a real effort to be friends with a chap. Deering did that with me. Didn't he with you?"

"Rather, yes."

"Have another drag?" said Macgregor.

"Thanks, don't care if I do."

He took the extended cigarette. Meath promptly relighted a fresh one, apparently forgetting that George was about to return the one already smoking. And Erroll did not remind him. He held the cigarette idly between his fingers, not smoking it, he subconsciously told himself, but every once in a while just taking a puff or so. The cigarette was growing smaller and smaller.

"Jolly old lad, Byron?" said Meath, kicking the volume of verse with his toes. "Hanged if I don't think I could do that sort of thing myself. Couldn't you? Ever have the notion that you wanted to discharge superfluous energy by scribbling rhyme?"

"Yes, now and then," admitted Erroll. "My stuff's rotten beyond belief, but it's good fun to try." He put the butt of the cigarette between his

lips for the last whiff it could be persuaded to yield. Suddenly a shadow fell athwart the sunlit stretch of water east of the Rock. Both glanced upward to the cliffs, dropping their cigarette-ends simultaneously into the pool.

"Now who the deuce was that?" exclaimed Meath.

"I—I couldn't see—some one——" He felt a sickening sensation of fear.

"Rot!" said Macgregor, "a sea gull flying over. See, there she goes!"

"No, no—it was too big a shadow. Somebody was on the cliffs." Erroll suddenly felt as if he were going to be sick.

"Hang it! Let's have a look."

Meath scrambled overboard unmindful that it was nearly waist-deep; waded ashore, bruising his toes badly, and climbed gingerly up the side of the cliff. His feet were bare and the rocks were sharp, so that the task was a difficult one. Erroll followed. It was, perhaps, ten minutes before they succeeded in scaling the precipitous cliff. Once on the ledge they looked about over the open smiling country. Broad fields, green with young wheat and laughing with daisies, stretched away to the foot of the tangled thickets of Lovel's Woods, with here and there a hedge row of mock-orange trees or an old stone wall between. Eastward lay the river, blue as an Italian lake, gleaming in the bright sunshine. Not a living creature was to be seen, save the flock of gulls or cormorants dashing foolishly about the

Rock, and a great hawk sailing serenely over the Woods. They strained their eyes in every direction.

"False alarm!" snapped Macgregor.

"I hope so," said Erroll, "but anybody has had time to get down below the cliff on to the beach. You couldn't see them from here."

"Rot! It didn't take us two minutes to get up the cliff. It was the gulls that cast the shadow. Come on, the water's bully. Let's have a swim and start back."

Erroll's heart was still beating wildly, but Meath's confidence reassured him. It couldn't have been any one, he told himself; no one could have disappeared so quickly.

They clambered down the side of the cliffs to the little beach of the cove, when they stripped off their trousers and jerseys, and soon were splashing happily in the crystal waters of the ocean pool. They had to swim at once, as they had already discovered that the bed of the cove was inhospitable to naked feet. They swam around the Rock and sunned themselves on one of the southern ledges facing the river and sea. From there they could see the school shells turning their noses homeward and the few sailboats tacking lazily toward their moorings.

"Time to go," said Meath.

In a few moments they were dressed, had launched their canoe, and were headed for the Third Beach. Meath grumbled a good deal about his wet trousers, but nothing more was said of cigarettes.

They had to work hard to get back in time for supper.

Erroll could not shake off his nervous apprehension. Even Pembroke failed to pull him out of his preoccupation when they went off to work together after evening study. He gave a full enough account of the outing, but kept back all reference to the smoking or their scare. Even Pem's holding out the dazzling possibilities of the Boxford game failed to dazzle.

"Rot, Ned! It will never be."

"Stranger things have happened," insisted Pem.

It was five minutes before lights when Erroll returned to his own room. He began to undress hastily, when the sight of an envelope addressed to himself, lying on his desk, suddenly arrested him. He opened it with trembling fingers, as one who is apprehensive of bad news opens a telegram. As he read the note it contained, the apprehension deepened into despairing certainty.

"You will not report hereafter with the baseball squad. We don't want fellows who can't keep training.

"H. WHITMORE, *Captain.*"

He had been right, he thought wildly, the shadow on the cove had meant disaster.

CHAPTER XI

TERM END

SOMEHOW Erroll survived the blow. It had not seemed to him that he could, but he did. Whitmore, with the indifference of a monarch, deigned to give no reasons for dropping him, even to the team. If he confided privately in Stenton, the coach also kept his counsel, so that, whether he deserved it or not, George's reputation was saved.

Meath naturally guessed what had happened and offered effusive condolence in the form of eloquent abuse of the opinion of tobacco held by Whitmore in particular and authorities in general. But George shut him up; sympathy in that form was not welcome.

"I don't want to talk about it," he protested. "There's no sense in abusing Whitmore. As a matter of fact, he was justified, and he's been more than decent not to blab the reason."

"You prefer, then, to have it thought that you simply couldn't make good at the bloomin' game?"

"Much," was Erroll's laconic reply.

"Well, everybody to his taste. So it was Hank that saw us?"

"I don't know. I suppose so."

"Prowling ass! To tell the truth you weren't really smoking; you only took a couple of drags off my weed."

"That doesn't let me out; besides it isn't true."

"Why don't you go and tell him?" continued Macgregor, paying no attention to the contradiction.

"Because I don't choose to. It's all of a piece with the sort of thing I've done from the beginning."

"From the beginning——?" Meath opened his eyes.

"Hang it, Mac! I told you I didn't want to talk about it."

"Right O! I'm off. When you are in a more amiable frame of mind, look me up, will you?"

"So long," Erroll replied shortly, as Meath went his way.

Whitmore's action had been almost as great a disappointment to Pembroke as it had been to Erroll himself. He had come up directly after practice the first afternoon that his friend failed to appear on the field to find George disconsolately looking over old magazines in the deserted Fourth Form common-room.

"I'm chucked," Erroll explained briefly to the impatient demand as to why he had not been at practice.

"Chucked! What for? By jove, man, you've made good. It was only last night I was telling you what I really think—there's a possibility of your

getting into the Boxford game. If Tim Corson's ankle doesn't get well, who is there but you and Snark Palmer? What the deuce is the matter with Hank?"

Until this moment Erroll had determined not to tell Pembroke the real reason for his dismissal; but to allow him, like the rest, to suppose that it was due to some discovered defect in his playing. But this expressed confidence, this sense of injustice felt in his behalf, disarmed him.

"Hank's all right," he said, his voice trembling a little. "He's more than all right not to have let out to every one why he chucked me. Fact is, I was a darn fool and smoked. He got on to it—I think he saw me himself."

"Smoked!" It was not the crime against the school but against the team that put the horror into Pembroke's exclamation. "What d'ye mean?" he asked, not taking it in.

"Oh, a cigarette—part of a cigarette, as it happened. Not much, but enough."

"With Macgregor?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"A lot to my way of thinking."

"Well, not to mine. It was nobody's fault but my own, if that's what you're driving at. Don't go blaming Mac."

Pembroke threw himself into a chair. There seemed nothing to say. George kept his unseeing eyes fixed on the page of the periodical spread before him on a table.

"Look at here," exclaimed Pem impatiently, after a moment or so of embarrassed silence, "chuck that fool paper and tell me about it!"

George threw the magazine aside. "There's nothing to tell."

"Why did you do it?"

"Because I'm just a plain darn fool."

"You haven't been doing it before, have you?"

"As it happens, no. I told you once that I only took a few whiffs. But what's the dif? The principle is the same; the consequences are the same. Point is, the trouble is with me. Remember that night at Whetstone how I told you I was always flunking—if not at work, then at play? You see, I've just flunked again."

"Rot! Shake that notion, can't you?"

"It's true."

"It needn't be true, then. I'm sorry—I can't tell you how sorry. Perhaps, there's a chance. Hank may be willing to give you another trial."

"I wouldn't ask for it."

Pembroke had risen as though he were going off. Erroll, in spite of his cursory replies, his seemingly dull acquiescence, was secretly watching his friend in an agony of doubt. Was it to culminate, as he feared, in Pembroke throwing him over? He could take the medicine of disappointment, of expulsion from the team; he could not bear to lose this friendship. And yet there was nothing he could do but wait until Pembroke had defined his attitude more clearly. To show his feeling, to make it evident

that doubt about his friend predominated over his sense of failure and disgrace, might be but to give the final push to Pembroke's tottering loyalty. He glanced at him swiftly.

Pembroke could not interpret Erroll's attitude; but ruder shocks than disappointment would be required to shake the instinctive loyalty of his friendships.

"I am sorry, old chap," he said again; and then, thinking that Erroll was disinclined to talk further about the incident, he slipped away. A plan had matured in his mind.

Erroll sat where Pem had left him for five minutes or so, gloomily watching his friend's figure retreating across the quadrangle in the direction of Standerland.

"It is the end," he thought, and his heart died within him. Suddenly he jumped up from the table and ran out into the quad with the wild notion of catching Pembroke and making an appeal. But the impulse died as quickly as it had been born. With heavy steps he walked over to the house, went up to his own room, and threw himself upon the bed, a prey to remorse and bitter grief. Supper and evening study that night were hours of torture that he lived through, it seemed, and that was all.

In the half-hour after schoolroom Pembroke had gone to Whitmore's study in the Old School and had made an earnest appeal to the captain to give the exiled substitute another chance.

Whitmore listened patiently. "I'd like to do

what you ask me, Pembroke," he said, "for you deserve a favor if any fellow on the team ever did; you've worked like a dog yourself and you've worked as hard for Erroll." He waved aside Pembroke's protest. "But it doesn't make any difference whether the kid smoked half a cigarette or a thousand. He broke training; he broke a rule of the school that he'd be fired for if he had been caught by a master instead of a prefect. I don't pose as a saint, and I am not a public censor; but I'll keep my team up to the mark or there won't be any team to keep. It was by the merest chance that I happened to be walking on the cliffs—out there by Castle Rock—and looked down the cove. There I saw George Erroll lying in a canoe and smoking cigarettes with that measly little runt Macgregor Meath. This will teach him a lesson. I won't peach on him. But I won't take him back. Sorry, old man, but that's final."

"All right; thank you, Hank. I just thought I'd try."

"No apologies necessary. Glad you came. Guess I'd have done the same for a pal in your place; and I guess you would do just what I have done, if you were captain of the team."

"Perhaps I should."

That night after lights Pembroke slipped into Erroll's room. It seemed to George afterward that, though he might live to a tremendous age and experience the supreme joys and tragic sorrows of the human heart, he could never know any emotion as

keen as the exquisite relief and the passionate gratitude he felt when he heard Pem's familiar friendly whisper, and realized that he had not been abandoned as an unworthy or unvalued friend.

They talked for hours in low tones, intimately, sympathetically, of their past years at school, of the hopes, fears, temptations, resolutions that had been theirs and would be theirs again. Such conversations do not often come even between good friends, but they are milestones in friendship when they do. They mark epochs in the life of the affections and set a seal on loyalties that time will not break.

After a week of eager anticipation at last came the important Saturday in early June, the day of the great game. The Boxford boys arrived at Deal soon after breakfast, having come over the hills from mid-Cæsarea in automobiles, which within the past year or so had replaced the picturesque old-fashioned coaches. The morning was given up to a tennis match between teams of the rival schools, and Boxford carried off the honors. At two o'clock the ball game was called on the great north field, which occupied the wide plateau of hilltop back of the school building. From the confines of the field the land sloped away, east and west to Deal Water and Beaver Pond and north to open fertile farming country. In every direction, save the north, the eye rested ultimately upon broad expanses of gleaming water—bay and river and

sea. Flags fluttered from the various houses and from the great staff at the southwest corner of the field. The bleachers were filled with noisy merry contingents of Deal and Boxford boys. Back of the ropes, along the first and third base lines, numerous carriages and motors were drawn up, from which visitors from Monday Port and other neighboring towns could watch the game. The two Head Masters strolled up and down together on the Greenway between the gridiron and the diamond, exchanging their biannual confidences.

George Erroll was lost among the crowd on the bleachers. He had deliberately avoided sitting with his friends, whom he could see just below him, expending much vocal energy in honor of Pembroke. Meath, Polly Teal, Grafton, Ware and Watson were all sitting together. It was the first time that Erroll had ever deliberately avoided association with the Insufferable Six, association which he had so deeply valued throughout the year. But to-day he wanted to be alone. If it had been possible he would have stayed away from the game entirely, but he had not the courage to do that. He was in a group of Third Formers, who paid him little attention after exchanging sly nudges as he had taken his seat.

The umpire, a funny fat little man from Coventry, Stenton, Whitmore, and the Boxford captain were standing together near the home plate; the other players were on the benches. Whitmore shook hands with the Boxford youth and then called to his

team; Stenton strolled back slowly to the Deal bench; and the cheer leaders gave the signal for three rousing locomotives. By this time the umpire had adjusted his chest-protector and mask and had stepped out to announce the batteries. He spoke in a shrill squeaky voice that contrasted oddly with the rotundity of his little body. "Batter up!" he called then, and struck an attitude of determined attention behind Billy Metcalf, the Deal catcher.

"Play ball!"

Whitmore stood in the pitcher's box. It was his last appearance, he realized, with a pardonable thrill of pride and a natural pang of regret, on a Deal field. A thousand pairs of eyes were upon him as he curled his long lank body, revolved his right arm in an extraordinary series of gyrations, and then delivered the ball with incredible speed directly over the plate into Metcalf's glove.

"Strike!" squeaked the umpire, and the bleachers roared.

The Boxford batsman glanced at the fat man with injured disdain. He had hardly resumed his position when the ball whizzed past, it seemed to him, within an inch of his nose. But he was mistaken, it had clipped the corner of the plate and his indignant nostrils had been quite safe.

"Strike two!" announced the absurd little fat man.

The batsman's languid disdain was exchanged for an expression of insulting incredulity. He sought the umpire's eye, but could not catch it.

"Strike three. Batter's out."

It was incredible, disgusting! He threw the bat aside and walked majestically to the bench, where he confided his opinion of the fat man to his colleagues in terms that did more credit to his imagination than his judgment. Deal was cheering ecstatically. It was too good to be true. Whitmore was an hallucination. But the same thing happened with the next two batsmen. The glorious Hank had pitched ten times and given only one ball.

The Deal nine trotted in to their benches, and Stenton clapped Whitmore on the shoulder. "Go out in a blaze of glory," he said; "you can do it. Make history, man."

Hank smiled gratefully, feeling a little that the admiration for his abilities was not misplaced.

It was a pitchers' game. For Boxford, having had experience of Whitmore for three years, had given attention to developing boys for that position. It was not an essentially exciting game to watch, but the two teams played with a zest and a professional finish that were a joy to the lover of baseball.

The seventh inning came and there had been no score—an unusual experience, for they had not "found" the Boxford pitcher.

As Whitmore wandered to the side line he languidly surveyed the eager-eyed substitutes sitting on the benches, striving so hard to look un-selfconscious. His glance settled on Palmer, familiarly

known as The Snark, who for four years had faithfully practiced with the squad and for four years had regularly failed to get into a big game. He was graduating this year—it was his last chance for his D.

"Butt in, Snark," said Whitmore, "and see if you can't do something for us."

Palmer rose. His chest expanded as though he was already sporting the long-coveted D. His hour had come, the hour of which he had secretly dreamed thousands of times and thousands of times despaired of. The psychology of sport should be studied by all captains and coaches. Whitmore was an instinctive psychologist.

The Boxford pitcher smiled softly. He was a handsome lad, and the smile was becoming. He thought passingly that they were beginning to realize that the hope of finding him was futile. "A duffer!" he commented mentally as he faced The Snark, in whose entire anatomy there was not a symptom of baseball ability. He ceased smiling, bent, twisted, swung his arm, and shot forth with explosive force a perfectly straight ball. Fifteen seconds later the right fielder was chasing it as it rolled toward the slope of land, the extreme normal limit of the field, and The Snark was circling the bases in an hysteric frenzy. An agitated coach, jumping frantically up and down and screaming at the top of his voice, succeeded in stopping him at third, as almost simultaneously the recovered ball

landed in the third baseman's glove, having been thrown in from deep right field.

"Safe!" squeaked the umpire, smoothing a wrinkle in the ground with his fat palm.

The Deal bleachers were frantic, and The Snark felt that at last the universe had justified itself.

Billy Metcalf was next at bat, and bunted. The Snark slid home in a cloud of dust perfumed with glory.

There is nothing more to tell. Two strenuous innings followed, but the Boxford pitcher had regained control. Hank never wavered, but struck three men out in the ninth inning as nonchalantly as he had in the first, and the game ended 1 to 0 by Pembroke catching an easy fly.

Erroll had forgotten himself in the excitement of the game, until The Snark was put in during the seventh inning. That might have been his chance! For the next few moments he lived in Palmer's personality: it was himself, he dreamed, who had made the hit, who had won the game, and who was being carried off the field in triumph on the shoulders of hysteric grateful rooters. Suddenly the vivid image dissolved. He found himself standing almost alone on the bleachers above the swaying, rushing, yelling mob of boys, and there was a taste in his mouth as of a mess of pottage.

Bells were ringing. The campus was a-thrill with exultant happy youth. He was glad, glad . . . but the bitter remembrance of his own failure had been brought back too vividly for him to join in it all

whole-heartedly. At night would come the bonfire and the customary celebration. . . .

On the Monday examinations were held, followed by a few days of anxious waiting for results. But Erroll had been working this term and had reëstablished his standing in the form. Then came Prize Day, another gala occasion, followed by a dance in the evening. And then it was the last Tuesday night and on the morrow he was to sail from New York for Liverpool. Baseball was over, school was over, cricket had long since been forgotten, and canoes were snug in the boathouse for the Long Vacation. Whitmore henceforth would be a glorious memory, and The Snark a meteor who had flashed splendidly on the night at the supreme moment. Farewells were being said.

"Good-bye, George, old chap; you'll write?"

"Of course; and you, Pem? Don't forget the address, Brown Shipley, London."

"No fear. Perhaps I'll see you over there."

"Gosh, I hope so! I hate leaving."

"And I. It's been a bully term after all."

"Bully," agreed George, a little wistfully.

"But the best is yet to come."

They clasped hands—a long, firm, friendly grip. And then the year was really over—that long, strange, eventful, wonderful year of hope and despair, of achievement and failure. The dream world of school was fading once more . . . the real world was emerging dimly from the mists of the

sea, the world in which Laura dwelled. Life was still before him. . . .

By evening of the next day all of the boys and most of the masters had left the school. The quiet was oppressive. There is no place on earth so still, so deserted, at the first so desolate, as a great school in the Long Vacation. The night was soft and somewhat humid; and a warm moist wind, the prevailing wind in summer, blew in from the southwest. It came in at the open windows of Deering's study, made the curtains flutter and the pile of papers on his desk rustle restlessly. It was laden with the heavy fragrance of the honeysuckle that clambered over the stone wall below.

Deering was sitting idly at his desk. The luscious sweetness of the night wind seemed in strange fashion to emphasize his loneliness, his unwonted sensation that the world was out of tune. It had been impossible for him to settle to any occupation,—to reading, writing, and then going quietly to bed; and yet he had not sought companionship even from Morris.

But the older master came up eventually to see him. Deering welcomed him cordially enough, and hospitably pushed toward him tobacco and cigarettes.

Morris filled his pipe and lighted it, and held the match as it burned until the flames scorched his fingers. Then he tossed it out of the window.

"Ah, these term-ends!" he said with a little smile that was half a sigh.

"Frankly, they're the devil, aren't they?" rejoined Deering. "I had no idea I would mind so much. Recalls the pulling out of Kingsbridge after graduation."

"It does, rather," assented Morris. "Curious thing, one doesn't grow used to them. One invariably has an absurd sensation that the bottom has fallen out of the universe. I always swear to myself that I will pull out the first thing, and then I never do."

"When do you sail?" asked Deering.

"Saturday week," Morris replied. "And you—where are you going?"

"To Bald Rock. The family are there. I wish you were coming down."

"I wish rather you were going over with me."

"No such luck yet awhile. Tell me, Bill," he exclaimed unexpectedly, "now that the term is over, how things have seemed to you to go in my case. You have been more than decent to keep back the criticism that must frequently have been in your mind if not on your lips."

Morris smiled. "No, really; there's been very little in my mind. You've done well and pleased the Head."

"But there must be a lot of things that you would have me do differently another year."

"No, very few. I have observed a tendency

rather than a situation," Morris replied. "I fancy you have been unconscious of it."

"A tendency to what?"

"Well," laughed Morris, "to being a little too unconscious. Your attitude, your relation with the boys, especially in the house, has been just what it seems to me it should be."

"Yes, but——"

"But, without your ever having done anything that I could wish to criticize even in a captious mood, I wonder if you realize how much you have allowed a certain little group to monopolize you?"

"A group? you mean——"

"The Six—the Insufferable Six."

"Really? why, of course, they seem always about, but they're omnipresent."

"That's just it. Some of them are always about. I fancy the school rather identifies them with you."

"It has not really been my fault if they have," protested Deering.

"Precisely," agreed Morris. "That is what I said at first. It is not that you have cultivated them, but that they have cultivated you."

The younger master laughed, but there was a pleasant flattery to realize that this had been the case.

"They are a corking lot of kids."

"Of course; it is only a corking lot that have such power and assurance. Though I do not share, as you know, your general approval of Meath."

"Oh, come; Mac's all right—most amusing kid in the form."

"Meath has traits that amuse one so long as he is a child, but as he grows older they are dubious virtues. The Insufferable Macgregor will live, I fear, to give us trouble."

"I think you're wrong; but you advise——"

"Nothing, Tony, but to keep your eyes open. Take the lead in your relations to boys. Give them the cue, or you will find you are taking it from them, which is usually a mistake. It becomes hard for you to pull out, and beastly rough on them."

"It's odd," said Deering after a moment's reflection, "but I never have thought of it in this light. If I have been preoccupied with a boy this term it is one of whom lately I have seen very little—George Erroll, in fact."

"Not quite the common or garden type of boy," commented Morris. "I should like to know Erroll; he has possibilities, which, it strikes me, he may not realize. You know the family situation?"

"Yes——"

"Bad for a kid. You, I take it, have got to know him?"

"Yes and no. In the fall and winter terms things went capitally between us. Then a little incident happened on the train coming back at Easter—he took amiss something I said, and since then he has scarcely been near me. He did not even take the trouble to say good-bye. I don't quite think in his place I should have done that."

"No," said Morris, "you were an appreciative kid, Tony, as I am thankful to recollect. But don't let Erroll go; hold on to him. He is the kind that it is worth while to make an effort for. He will never take advantage of it as Meath or Grafton unfailingly would."

"Queer sort of life, isn't it?"

"No—it's just life. People who know nothing about school always imagine that it is a little world apart and quite different from the big real world. It is apart, but it is not different. Human nature is pretty much the same; boy nature is the same, only more so." . . .

It was late when they separated for the night. The warm wind was heavy with fog that was drifting in from the sea.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETREAT FROM RUSSIA

FIFTH Form year usually marks a realignment of forces and personalities in a class. Boys who have begun to take school life seriously, who have ambitions for intellectual and athletic distinction, have begun to learn the necessity of purpose and application. Old associations and friendships persist doubtless, but they receive new color and meaning. New alliances are formed, and the permanent leaders of the class are accorded recognition.

This process taking place in the Fifth Form at Deal was reflected within the smaller circle of the Insufferable Six, who were still linked by the solemn vows and intimate irregularities of the Kappa Upsilon.

Meath had returned in the fall, definitely aware for the first time that his ascendancy over his crowd had materially weakened and that his ultimate leadership, even of the Six, had become a matter of uncertainty. Wit, cleverness, ability, and will to conceive and execute the lark so dear to the heart of the lower school boy, had given him his preeminence. It was threatened now not because he had changed, but because he had not kept pace with

the others in their changes and developments. Clever as he was, Macgregor was still incapable of measuring the moral progress of his companions. He felt his influence waning, but did not realize that it was merely force of habit and the instinctive loyalty of boys that even so long had maintained him in his position.

It was a new experience for him to feel his way. But during the fall term football and the out-door life of glorious autumn weather absorbed the school, so that the opportunity did not arise until the winter term for him to bring the situation to an issue. He determined, rashly or not, that the test of the loyalty of his friends should be the admittance of George Erroll to membership in the Kappa Upsilon, a test in which zeal for Erroll had imperceptibly begun to play second part to his determination to have his way.

Grafton, he realized, in the language of *Macbeth,* was the step on which he must fall down or else o'erleap. Donald had disliked Erroll from the first, and, though he strove under ordinary circumstances to conceal his antipathy and welcome him in their crowd, he persistently blackballed him on every occasion that Meath had presented his name. Interest in the Kappa Upsilon had somewhat waned, but none of the Six had yet reached the subliminal heights of virtue where nocturnal and secret feasts no longer appeal.

Meath, still the Quadrangle of the brotherhood, called a meeting for a Sunday night in February.

They had all been to Deering's room for a "feast," so that eating for once was to be no part of the program. As of old they met in Ware and Watson's rooms, in Montrose, and they had an unpleasant time getting there, for the night was wild and stormy.

The coast was clear, however, as Little Beverly, suffering from a prevalent influenza, had retired early to bed. The customary ritual was performed, and at a proper stage of the proceedings Meath resigned the chair and took the floor. He felt very much as an English prime minister doubtless feels at the end of a long parliamentary struggle, when he realizes that his tenure of power depends upon his securing the ear of the House by a supreme oratorical effort.

"I have the honor, my brothers," he began, buttoning his coat about his slim little body, and throwing an accent of profound solemnity into the tones of his voice, "to propose again for membership in this society Mr. George Erroll, of the Fifth Form of Deal School—Heaven save President Forester!—Mr. Erroll has now been among us for three years and we have had ample opportunity to reach the conclusion that his companionship would provide a valuable addition to our society meetings and feasts. I think I may say that there is no doubt of this in the minds of any of the brethren, with a solitary exception. Erroll, I am proud to say, is one of my best friends. He is also an intimate friend of our beloved brother, Tumbler Pembroke. He is on terms

of good fellowship, if not of intimacy, with us all. I make a last appeal to you to admit him to our brotherhood."

"Any repartee to the Quadrangle's joke?" asked Douglas Ware, who was presiding.

"Mr. Triangle," exclaimed Polly Teal, jumping to his feet, with flashing eyes and flaming cheeks, "I'm strong for Erroll."

"No slang, I beg!" whispered Meath in an aside.

"So am I!" said Watson; "it's a darn shame, Graf, to keep him out."

"Address the chair please," admonished Ware. "Tumbler Pembroke?"

Pem stood, waiting for silence. He looked considerably older than he had the year before. He was taller, more confident, more self-contained. "Mr. Triangle, I have seen a great deal of Erroll in the past year, as you all know. I like him a lot, and I think he would make a good member of the society. He is emphatically a member of our crowd, and, as long as the Kappa Upsilon holds together, I think it is unfair not to elect him in."

"Good!" exclaimed Meath. "But we mean to hold together all right."

"Tumbler Grafton?" Ware recognized Donald.

Grafton was a little agitated and spoke with difficulty. It is not pleasant to face the united opposition of one's most intimate friends.

"I am sorry to go against you fellows," he said slowly. "I have been hoping that Meath had had enough of bringing this name up. I know you all

want him in; but I can't vote for him. I won't vote for him," he added, turning to face Meath, who had voiced an impatient angry exclamation.

The leader was on his feet. "I'd like to ask Tumbler Grafton to state his reasons for this persistent opposition to the will of the society."

"I decline to state my reasons."

"I move, Mr. Triangle, that the club request Mr. Grafton to state his reasons. There is a by-law that requires a member to do so on unanimous request."

The motion was put and carried.

"Very well," said Grafton doggedly, "you force me to say things I don't choose to say. I don't like Erroll; I never have liked him, and the reason I don't like him is because I think he is a cheat and a liar."

"By jove!" cried Meath, "Erroll's a friend of mine, and you've got to prove what you say. You can't——"

"Order!" cried Ware. "The Quadrangle is fined twenty-five cents for being out of order."

"Fine away! but he's got to prove his accusations."

Polly conscientiously inserted the fine in his notebook. "I think you ought to prove it, Don," he began; but Pembroke interrupted, "Let him alone. Of course, Grafton won't make such accusations behind a fellow's back, without giving his reasons. Shut up, Mac; give him a chance."

Donald had been waiting till the excitement sub-

sided. "I'm ready to prove what I say. In the first place, I've seen Erroll cheat in Latin exams."

"I don't believe it!" cried Meath.

"Then I lie?" said Donald facing him hotly.

"Silence!" roared Ware. "Don't interrupt again, Quadrangle. Go on, Mr. Grafton."

"I repeat I have seen him cheat."

"When?" demanded Pembroke.

"Last year—the first part of last year, at least half a dozen times. And what's more I've known him to lie. He's lied to masters; he's lied to me. Another thing, he broke training last spring when he was trying for the baseball team, and smoked on the sly."

Meath was ablaze with anger. "You darn mucker! You've no right to bring that up; I told you that myself in confidence."

"Yes, I know you did. I have never told it before. But do you suppose you can tell me things like that without my forming an opinion of the fellow you tell 'em on? You ask me why I don't want Erroll in the Kappa Upsilon and I'm telling you. I will blackball him till the day of judgment. And, if you call me a mucker again, I'll punch your face in after the meeting."

"I withdraw the term," said Meath with superb dignity, "but I'd like to ask you what breaking training has to do with being a member of the Kappa Upsilon? I was smoking myself that day. We have all smoked more than once, I guess, since we've been at school."

"Perhaps we have," said Grafton, "and perhaps we haven't. I know that none of us have broken training in that way when we were trying for a school team."

"Pshaw! I've never kept training in my life," exclaimed Meath.

"I wouldn't boast of the fact," retorted Grafton. "It's nothing to be proud of. My only excuse for you," he added, "is that you haven't tried for anything more strenuous than cricket or checkers. I dare say Little Beverly would approve of mild cigarettes for the Anglomaniacs, if the Doctor didn't forbid it."

"Cut this out, Graf!" exclaimed Pembroke. He stood facing them with a grave and troubled face. "Don't let's break up by having a rotten row. I see Grafton's point of view, and I share it to a certain extent. But I want to say just as strongly as I can that I believe that George Erroll bitterly regrets anything of the kind he has ever done. We are none of us cheats or liars, but we're not angels, Graf, as you know too well; and I don't think you're treating Erroll squarely,—as you'd be treated yourself."

"I don't think I'm treating him unfairly, Pem," replied Grafton, appeased somewhat by Pembroke's words of conciliation. "We formed this society because we were a congenial crowd. We made a rule that everything we did should be by unanimous vote. Erroll's a friend of yours and of Mac's. I have tried to like him, and I can't. I try to keep

my dislike out of sight in ordinary matters; but, feeling as I do about him, I can't vote to make him a member of the society, and what's more I won't be bamboozled into doing so by Meath. I have let Meath run me in this school too darn long. I can't trust Erroll—he acts always to me as though he had something to conceal, he's not open."

"Well, haven't you ever done anything you've tried to conceal?" asked Macgregor. "Do you set up to be such a spotless lily that you can't grow in the same field with the speckled variety?"

"Drop that flowery rot!" said Grafton. "I don't understand it; time's past, I tell you, when you can impose on me by talking over my head. I won't vote for Erroll, and that's all there is to it. Look here, will you fellows swear you think Erroll has always been straight except for the training business?"

"Of course I'll swear."

"Of course you will," retorted Grafton, "you'd swear that white was black if it suited your purpose. I was addressing Pem principally and the others, not you."

"I think you are wrong about Erroll, Graf, honestly I do," Pembroke replied. "I won't try to defend some of the things he may have done in the past. I know him well. I know he regrets them. I don't think he'll ever do 'em again."

"Pshaw!" interrupted Tom Watson, "why all this jaw? We are not a society for the cultivation

of high moral ideas. I want Erroll in, but I'm not for him if Graf can't see it that way."

"I certainly am not," exclaimed Polly. "I like Erroll, but I know he did used to cheat in exams."

"Oh, hold your tongue, jackass," exclaimed Macgregor, "and, if you do speak, try to use the English language. You're a regular wind-mill. Haven't you ever cheated?"

"No, I haven't," exclaimed Polly passionately, "and you know it."

"You flatter yourself, ass ears," replied Meath, "I don't know it; what's more, I don't believe it. You're a bloomin' bunch of hypocrites. There's not one of you who hasn't smoked, who hasn't lied out of a thousand scrapes, who hasn't cribbed in class. By jove, I have furnished the cigarettes for the lot of you, I have invented the lies you've told,—that your woolly head couldn't think of, Grafton,—and I have done half the work for the crowd for the past three years. It isn't virtue that has kept you honest, Grafton, but stupidity."

"I know I am stupid," Grafton replied, controlling himself with more success than might seem possible, "I have always been stupid. I have been so dog-goned stupid that I have followed your lead in this school without half taking in what a down and out rotter you are. But I'll tell you this—I have never cheated at an exam; I haven't smoked since Third Form year when you used to coax me over to the Woods and give me cigarettes, and I know

darn well that I never meant to tell a deliberate lie."

"Oh, heaven! this touching innocence—youth and bloom!"

"Spit out your sarcasm. That's your only weapon. I'll tell you another thing—I'm through with you for good and all."

"For gosh' sake drop this! We'll go to smash!" cried Ware. "Shut up, both of you. I'll not put Erroll's name; he can't get in now. If Graf changes——"

"Well, he won't," said Donald.

Meath was imperiously gesticulating for silence and attention. "It's come to this, fellows, I guess—Grafton or I get out of this club. I offer my resignation; accept it or not. But I will not stay here to be insulted and have my friends insulted by a lot of vulgar accusations."

"No, no," they objected in chorus.

"Let's adjourn."

"Settle it later."

Pembroke was on his feet and got attention. "Fellows, it must be plain that the purposes for which the club was formed no longer appeal to us. The only point to it was that we all thought alike, did the same things, hung with the same crowd and together. I move that the Kappa Upsilon dissolve permanently."

"Second the motion!" cried Teal.

Meath paled, but cast a withering glance at Polly.

"All those in favor of the Kappa Upsilon dissolving permanently, say Aye," cried Ware.

A chorus of affirmatives greeted him.

"Opposed, No."

"No!" said Meath, and he felt like Napoleon on the field of Waterloo.

"The Kappa Upsilon is dissolved."

Macgregor bowed his head, flashed one long look at his old disciples, and disappeared out of the window.

"There goes the Kappa Upsilon," said Ware, as Meath banged the window behind him.

"You forget Mr. Deering, who was elected in petto, in pectore (ablative singular, third declension, neuter)," said Grafton dryly. "Come on, Polly."

They too followed.

"What a rotten row!" said Tom, beginning to undress.

"It is that," said Pembroke, as he made ready to descend for the last time by "the rope of sand." "But I'm not sorry in some ways. Graf's wrong about Erroll; but, feeling as he does, I for one don't blame him. Don't you fellows change toward Erroll because of this."

"No fear," said Ware. "I like him. Graf's hot-headed and prejudiced. But it's too bad. Good old Kappa Up; we'll miss it. Good-night, Pem."

"Good-night." Pembroke was gone.

"Tough on Mac!" said Tom to his roommate.

"Mac's skin is thick. He'll survive. Guess it is

just as well. But we had some good times, eh? Remember——" . . .

They talked on in reminiscent vein till far into the night.

As Meath sped across the rain-swept campus to the cover of his own dark room in Standerland, he thought of Napoleon and the retreat from Russia, likening in all sincerity his present situation with that of the great conqueror. And he remembered that after Russia and Waterloo there had been St. Helena and not Elba. He had had his falls before, but nothing that had touched his inner self, his vanity, his power; but now, despite the rain that drenched him to the skin in the few hundred yards he ran, he thought of his prestige as crumbled into dust.

In the first place he had never supposed that, if the issue were forced, Grafton would have the courage to persist: Grafton's flat rebellion had been beyond the scope of his imagination. Then also, he had counted more on Pembroke. Pembroke and Erroll were close friends; Pembroke must know all there was to know about Erroll; Pembroke would stand by a friend. And yet, somehow, his alliance at the meeting had not counted for much.

When he got safely to bed and was dry and warm again, he lay awake for a long while thinking over the scene in which he had just taken part, bringing all the powers of his naturally keen wits to bear upon the analysis of the situation. The charges of lying, cheating, breaking training, against Er-

roll he dismissed, so far as Grafton had brought specific instances to bear in proof. He was compelled to acknowledge to himself that there was in his rebellious satellite a certain rough appreciation of honor, of truthfulness, of reverence for the moral law of Deal, that was keener than his own; but yet, through all the past years of their intimacy, Grafton must have known that Meath himself was not scrupulous in such matters, and that knowledge had never caused him to betray a symptom of shrinking from their intimacy. Despite Donald's apparent frankness in bringing instances in proof of his accusations, Meath was convinced that he had not given his real reason for supposing Erroll to be guilty of dishonorable conduct. What could be the reason? What could Grafton possibly know about Erroll that he himself did not know? that Pembroke did not know? that Mr. Deering, for instance, did not know? They had been Erroll's friends, liked him, trusted him. But did Pembroke know anything? Did Mr. Deering, perchance?

Suddenly at the thought Meath sat bolt upright in bed. Deering! What train of thought did that name suggest in association with Erroll and Grafton? Curiosity, ever his most powerful intellectual stimulus, set his mind vigorously at work. He ran rapidly over the outstanding incidents of his intercourse with Erroll, particularly during the first days of their intimacy the year before. Like a flash he recalled, what for months he had not once thought of, that his original motive in cultivating

Erroll had been a vague suspicion that there was something—something—that had led to Deering's friendship for the boy, something that had stirred in Erroll quite unusual gratitude, inspired quite unusual devotion. He remembered, vividly enough now, a scene on the ice a year ago, when he had held a conversation with Donald Grafton on that very subject. He could see the bright green sky, the snow-clad hillside, rosy with sunset, and Deering and Erroll walking up together from the Pond to the School. He had pointed them out to Grafton. "A neat little psychological problem—I shall find out—I shall find out!" Those had been his very words. That had been his motive for taking Erroll up; and then he had liked him for himself, and in the year of intimacy that followed he had quite lost sight of his purpose. And in the meantime Grafton—the stupid Grafton, who had wool for brains,—had succeeded where he had failed, blundered on the secret with the luck of fools when the wise had gone astray. Grafton had solved Erroll's equation, and the solution was Meath's Retreat from Russia and his Waterloo! It was so absurd as to be funny!

He lay back again on his pillow and smiled in the dark with satisfaction at his appreciation of the subtleties and complexities of life. Fresh purposes inspired his soul. He was not the man to accept defeat. Defeat? he reflected, wasn't it defeat to have acquiesced in the dissolution of the Kappa Upsilon? He had no illusions as to his ability to restore the *status quo* and regain his ascendency

over the Six as a compact organization. Grafton and he had exchanged words that gentlemen do not forget, that make permanent differences. Grafton's rebellion had ended in revolution and the revolution had swept him from his seat of power, as all dictators are swept sooner or later by the stupid fools who are ruled only in virtue of their stupidity. Let the society go. They had outgrown it. If he had been wiser, he would have foreseen what was coming and abolished it himself. As it was, he could still take comfort in the thought that he had himself precipitated the catastrophe; that even in the hour of disaster he had stood immovable like a stone wall, demanding the right to be a tyrant or refusing all part in the common lot. Grafton had cast himself against that wall and there had been disaster. Let them see who would emerge intact from the débris.

He reckoned his forces. In this reckoning Erroll assumed new significance. It was essential now at all costs to keep Erroll bound to himself by links of steel, such links as the prosy old fool in *Hamlet* commended to his son. He could not afford to quarrel for George Erroll's sake and have Erroll ignorant or unappreciative of the sacrifice. Pembroke too, as a friend of Erroll's, he could, he must count on. Ware and Watson—good fellows, easy-going, hating a row—no danger there! Polly Teal, of course, when the split had come, had taken sides with Grafton. He would assume Polly's defection. He made a graceful delicately-ironical speech, to

which Polly was witness, making Grafton a present of Teal.

When at last he dropped asleep he had reconstructed a new dominion in his imagination, which Grafton and Teal beheld from afar with envious eyes. He was the man who should come back!

The obligation of secrecy had, up to this time, prevented even Meath from telling Erroll much about the Kappa Upsilon; but that embargo lifted, George soon received an ample and detailed account of the society from its brilliant infancy to its untimely death. Meath gave a full and vivid version of the final scene. And his own character and conduct suffered nothing in the telling.

Erroll listened to Macgregor's long tale with interest, only occasionally interjecting a comment or asking a question. Erroll had not changed greatly in the past six months; he was taller, he had begun to fill out a bit; but he was still a graceful slender youthful figure. He had the same quiet retiring but pleasant manner, and displayed the same readiness to blush furiously and to be overcome now and then by sudden gusts of intense shyness. He knew the boys better, but his relations to them or to the school had not materially changed. There had been a pause in his development.

The conversation had begun during the course of a walk up the beach one raw windy half-holiday in February, a few days after the scene in Ware's and Watson's room. After struggling in discomfort for

a while against the cold southeaster, they turned back and went to the pie-house. Mrs. Wadmer was persuaded to let them have their sausage and eggs in her dining-room so they could talk in private. Echoes of the laughter and noisy chatter of the boys in the kitchen beyond came to them continually.

Erroll had never known much about the Kappa Upsilon. He had been a guest at one feast—the feast which had resulted in Meath's caning; he had known that Macgregor meant to put him up for membership, and had been vaguely annoyed that nothing had ever come of it; but as none of the others, not even Pembroke, had ever mentioned the society to him, it had not loomed large on the horizon of his consciousness.

As he listened to Meath's account and it gradually dawned on him that his candidacy had played a large part in the recent history of the secret fraternity, his interest became acute. When he learned definitely that it was Grafton's refusal to admit him that had resulted in the dissolution of the club, he was disturbed by a variety of intense sensations: chagrin at Grafton's persistent dislike; annoyance that he should be the cause of a quarrel among the Six; gratification at the thought of Meath's and Pembroke's loyalty; and then, overwhelming all of these, sudden swift terror lest Grafton's estimate of him should be accepted by the others, ultimately by the school, and all that he had won at Deal be swept away.

"Of course," Meath continued, taking his last

bite of sausage, "nobody will pay the slightest attention to Grafton's absurd accusations. Every fellow present assured me of that; and, to give that stupid devil his due, Graf is not the sort to spread scandal and make mischief."

Erroll was pale and troubled. "What a mess!" he said. "It makes me feel like the deuce. I wouldn't have come between any of you fellows for the world."

"Of course you wouldn't; we all realize that; and you haven't, except between Grafton and me, and that was inevitable. Even Pem didn't quarrel with Graf. But—well, I'm for a chap or I'm not; and, if I am for him, I am for him through thick and thin, and the rest can go hang."

"As far as that goes," rejoined Erroll, "you've always been 'for' Grafton."

"Not so much of late, not so much of late—because Graf's been becoming beautifully less for me. To be frank, it was Graf or you. And *you* certainly are not the one to blame me for making the choice I do."

"By jove, no!" exclaimed Erroll; "you've been a mighty good friend to me. I appreciate that. But you can see, Mac, how rotten it all makes me feel."

"Of course it makes you feel rotten. But give me a little credit for feeling rotten too. One doesn't break with the friends of one's childhood, you know, without dropping a tear or two. I wouldn't tell you anything about it, if it weren't that you can't

help seeing there's been a break and finding out sooner or later what it was about. I'd rather you had the whole business straight from me. It is rotten, but I guess we'll have to stand for that. Look at here, George, old chap, there is just one thing I want to ask and one thing I want to say to you, and then we'll drop the subject for good and all."

"What are they?"

"It goes without saying that we don't take stock in Graf's accusations about your cheating and all that. We have all cheated at times; we have all lied when occasion offered; we've all smoked——"

Erroll bit his lips. "If I have cheated," he said, "I have been sorry for it—blamed sorry. And as for lying—I hate it. I sometimes think I'd rather kill myself than lie deliberately. And, as for smoking, you know how much smoking I've done at school."

"Let's see," said Macgregor, "half a cigarette outside, wasn't it? My fault at that."

"Not at all. But, in justice to the others, I don't agree with you. Pem, I know, is straight as a string; clean as a whistle. I don't believe one of 'em would stand for that sort of thing."

"Of course not, in really serious matters. Neither would I. But I just want to know—now don't misunderstand me—do you think it possible that Graf could—well, that he could think he has something on you that he wouldn't tell and that the rest of us don't know about?"

"No, no," replied Erroll quickly, with a painful flush; "there's nothing for him to have on me."

"I was sure of it. But he's got some fool bee in his bonnet, ass that he is! What I want to say, however, is this: if you and I hang together, Grafton and the whole darn Kappa Upsilon, kit and boodle, can go hang."

He reached over with a fine air of spontaneity and placed his hand on Erroll's. Unconsciously George moved his hand away and began awkwardly to play with the fork by his plate. The gush of sentimental gratitude that Meath expected and was prepared for did not come.

They sat for a moment in embarrassed silence.

Suddenly Macgregor rose. "Come on; let's settle with the old lady, and get back. I have got a debate to work up for the Civics to-night. By the bye, like to join?"

"What?—the Civics? Yes, very much. I mean, I can't; I don't——"

"Of course you would. I've meant to put you up before. Pshaw!" he laughed, noticing Erroll's flushed face, "you'll be elected without a murmur; none of this silly rot there."

They started toward the door.

"Don't think I am not grateful, Mac," stammered Erroll.

"Cut that!" said Meath. "The less said the better. You know the situation now. I just didn't want you to be surprised when the blessed old Six turns out but a memory of the glorious past."

CHAPTER XIII

LAURA

THE ordinary life of a school is that of a strict, if varied, routine. Time passes swiftly; terms that look interminable at the beginning seem to have been the shortest in memory at the end. Development and progress, pause or retrogression, are difficult to mark and analyze. The morale of a school, as the character of a boy, is, except in extreme instances, a matter of impression. Important crises are exceptional and often imperceptible. The background of the little dramas, comedies or tragedies, of the lives of individuals is always the routine life of the school.

The dissolution of the Kappa Upsilon was on the whole a good thing for the boys who composed its membership. It marked a crisis only for four—Meath, Grafton, Pembroke and Erroll. The school went on as usual, ignorant of the obsequies of the fraternity as it had been forgetful of its existence. Hockey and basketball vanished with the winter snow and slush to make way for baseball and cricket and the sunshine of spring.

Meath and Grafton, influenced by their friends, had avoided an open break. They had exchanged

words by which each technically withdrew offensive remarks; but the apparent peace was in fact only an armistice; at least in Macgregor's opinion.

For Pembroke, though he said nothing on the subject even to Erroll, the passing of the Kappa Upsilon marked the end of his long intimacy with Macgregor Meath. They met continually, as each maintained a close friendship with Erroll, but the old easy relation was a thing of the past.

After George Erroll recovered from the first shock of Meath's confidences, he resumed the normal tenor of his way. Grafton's opinion of him had cut deep, but he had been intensely relieved as it became apparent that the accusations made against his character had had no effect on the attitude of the others toward him. What chiefly troubled him as time went on was Meath's strange question as to whether it were possible that Grafton had had "something on him" which he did not choose to bring to light. Could Grafton, by any ill chance, know of the taking of the examination paper from Mr. Roylston's desk? Could Grafton, for instance, know that he had been using a translation during the past year to get up his Vergil? He could not believe that Mr. Roylston or Mr. Deering had betrayed his secret, nor Pembroke. And as for the "trot," no one knew of that. He had bought the translation at a little shop in London the previous summer. At first he had meant only to use it for difficult passages, but the occasional use had become habitual. He had felt twinges of conscience

on the subject, and after the talk with Meath he had hidden the translation away and dug out the lesson by himself, or with Meath's assistance. In consequence, at first his Latin marks began to suffer, which seemed to him a poor reward of virtue.

One afternoon Macgregor was in his room doing the Vergil assignment with him. Ordinarily Meath read fluently and easily, sliding over the slippery places of difficult construction and unusual words. On this occasion they fell foul of a particularly complex passage in the Fourth Book of *The Æneid*.

"Confound it!" said Macgregor, "I can't make head or tail of the bloomin' thing. Corrupt text, I guess. Think the Gumshoe will swallow that suggestion?"

"Rather not," Erroll answered. "Wait a second and I'll look it up in my trot."

He had spoken thoughtlessly, at the same time springing up from the desk to get the book. He stopped suddenly, overwhelmed with confusion, scarlet with mortification.

"A trot!" exclaimed Mac. "Bully! let's have it."

There was nothing for it. Erroll went to his bureau drawer and drew forth the guilty thing from beneath a pile of shirts.

Meath apparently was still busy with the text and had not noticed his companion's agitation. He took it gratefully. "Lucky you've got it," he said, looking up the passage, "this will save us a flunk if we get called on for these lines. I say!" he added, in a casual tone, turning over the leaves, "have you

been using a trot regularly?" This time he looked up at Erroll's face.

"Hang it, yes!" George answered. "But I haven't used it for the past few weeks, and I didn't mean to again. I forgot, just now."

"Why not use it?" asked Meath.

Again the color surged into Erroll's dark cheeks. "Can't you guess what it feels like to be called a cheat? Curse it all! hand it here!"

He snatched the book angrily from Macgregor's limp fingers; and, while his friend regarded him with amazement, he ripped the covers off and tore the book into shreds, throwing the wreck into the waste-paper basket with an exclamation of disgust.

For several moments there was an embarrassed silence. At last Meath gave a short odd laugh. "What's the dif?" he murmured. "Why work yourself into a stew?"

"Drop it, will you?" exclaimed Erroll. "I'm done with that sort of thing, I tell you, for good and all. Come on, let's finish it."

Meath dropped his eyes and they went on with the work. The thought in both minds was identical—Grafton had something up his sleeve after all.

Neither referred to this incident again. In the meanwhile Meath had been as good as his word and had put his friend up for membership in the Civics Club, and Erroll was frankly delighted by his election. Travel had given him wider information of European political conditions than most boys possessed and he wrote well, occasional verses and

sketches for the *Deal Literary Magazine,* so that he was regarded as a valuable acquisition. The chief aim of the Civics Club was to stimulate interest in debating and public speaking. In addition to the monthly formal debate, each member in turn was required at the weekly meetings to give a résumé of current events.

Erroll had never spoken in public before and on the day that he was scheduled to give the weekly summary he was nervous and depressed; he was sure that he would break down. But he had read the daily papers diligently and had his topic well in hand. He was to be the first speaker of the evening, and in the few minutes devoted to the preliminary business he tried hard to keep his courage up. But his throat was dry, and his hands were shaking foolishly.

At last he heard his name called and was on his legs. "Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Civics Club—" His voice sounded hollow and far-away. He felt suffocated; the faces of the boys around the long table were receding into a dim distance; Mr. Stenton, who was presiding, seemed to be dissolving into the invisible. Erroll's lips continued to move, but he made no sound. The blood suffused his face and then left it white. Snuffer Jennings, who was sitting next to him, took hold of his elbow and pulled him back into his chair. . . . There was a stir, but for a moment or so he did not know what was going on. . . .

Gradually he regained his composure. Stenton

had called the debate, and Pembroke was making an argument. George sat still and tense, his head down, scarcely conscious of what was said. At last the debate was over, the judges retired to consider their decision, and the fellows chatted idly with each other while waiting for the verdict. Snuffer made a nice little remark about nothing in particular, to which Erroll did not reply.

Somehow he got to his feet again. "Mr. President, if the club is willing, I would like to make my remarks on current events now."

Stenton nodded and rapped for order, and George began to speak. It was a struggle, but he got through with it. . . . Fellows good-naturedly congratulated him as the meeting broke up, and Stenton detained him after the others had gone out of the library.

"I was mighty glad to see you get up the second time, Erroll. It was plucky. Don't mind that first flunk. It was just simple stage fright. Lots of people have it. You did well, and you're over the worst. You'll never feel that way again, not so badly anyway. In a month it will be the simplest thing in the world."

As the year drew toward a close this prophecy was fulfilled. Erroll had learned to debate, if not eloquently, at least with ease and force. The Civics Club absorbed a great deal of his time and attention, second only to baseball. He went out again for the team and achieved a certain measure of

success, becoming one of the three regular substitutes. He was to go to Boxford in June, with the possibility of getting into the game.

It was about the middle of May that he received a letter from his mother which was materially to affect his future. Mrs. Erroll wrote from Paris, whither she had gone, as usual, at the end of the winter.

"My darling boy—(the letter ran)

"You have been neglected *shamefully* of late, but through no fault of *my own* I need not assure you. I do so hope that you are well and happy and that all is going at the school as you would wish to have it. It has been the greatest satisfaction in the midst of all my anxieties and troubles that you should be so contented and do so splendidly. I had hoped to get to America at Easter and see you, but it was an utter impossibility—for I should have *preferred* to explain to you face to face what now I must bluntly write. Your father, my dear boy, has proposed *most unexpectedly* to take charge of Laura, complete her education in a fitting manner, provide her with a suitable home, and make adequate provision for her future. After years of neglect this was *surprising!* You can imagine the *agony* the separation will cost me but I cannot be so selfish as to stand in the way of the dear girl's welfare. I have received assurances *of course* that her environment at your father's house will in every way be suitable. Heaven knows, dearest George, that I am more and more unable to provide the advantages a girl of her beauty and cleverness should have. And then the life we live! all very well for me doubtless but it had been very hard for dear Laura. She is very *brave* and goes in a good spirit—indeed by the time you receive this letter she will be on the way to New York. Your father, I am bound to tell you, has made the same proposition with regard to you. I have *not* accepted it as you are now

of an age when you should use your own judgment in the matter. I need not tell you that I know you will be guided by a sense of *duty*. I would be forlorn indeed were I to be deserted by *both* my children!

"I long to see you—so I trust that nothing will prevent our reunion in London in June. Of course if opportunity offers you will see dearest Laura after her arrival and let me know whether she is *really* happy. My home—such as it is—will always be open to her. The dear child naturally will never utter a complaint to me. She has been an angel verily.

"Continue to do well, dearest boy, and write me very soon a good long letter, for I am very sad and *lonely*. How quickly life goes and how little we see what is before us! Oceans of love.

"Your devoted

"MUDZIE."

George was not altogether surprised by this letter; he had so long been accustomed to look only for the unexpected in his mother that he immediately accepted the situation as accomplished. He could not understand, however, his father's change of attitude. He had bitterly resented the fact that in providing for his schooling his father had expressed no desire for personal relations. In a subsequent mail he received a brief note from Laura, merely announcing that it had been decided that she was to come to New York and live with her father, making no comment as to whether or not the prospect pleased her. Erroll wondered if his father would communicate directly with him on the matter. Within the week Mr. Erroll did so.

"NEW YORK, *19 May.*

"My dear George:

"Some years ago, when it seemed best that your mother and I should live apart for the future, I unwisely agreed to abstain from communication with your sister Laura and yourself. As you grew older I felt it my duty to secure you the advantages of an education in your native land, advantages that I knew your mother was no longer in a position to give you. My offer was accepted, as you know; but, as you may not know, it was stipulated again that I should make no effort to see you. Rather than have you deprived of the opportunity I was able to give you, again, unwisely as I now feel, I consented to the condition. More recently the situation has materially changed. Your mother has seen fit to legalize our separation by divorce. I did not approve of this, but I offered no opposition. When I learned that a decree had been granted, I again made a proposition to your mother to undertake the maintenance and education of both of our children and offered to provide them with a home with me. Doubtless your mother has already told you that she has accepted my proposition for your sister Laura, but that she would leave you to decide for yourself.

"You will perhaps understand that I write to you with a sense of difficulty, and a restraint that is deliberately assumed. I hope very much that you will come to see me as soon as you can conveniently, or, if you would prefer and it can be satisfactorily arranged, I will come to Deal. I want to know my children. My seeming neglect, if a mistaken course, was what, under difficult circumstances, seemed best. I should be very happy to have both Laura and you in my own home. I must not conceal from you, however, that should you come to live with me opportunities of being with your mother will be rare. I do not know whether she wishes you to accept my offer or not; and I write now merely to give you a sincere and cordial invitation to come and visit me so that we may have the opportunity of talking matters over. I earnestly hope you will accept it.

"In case you do not care to live with me, you need have no

anxiety as to your education. I will continue to do in the future what I have done for the past four years.

"Believe me,

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN PARTON ERROLL."

George read this letter, the first that he had ever received from his father, in a critical spirit. He had known nothing of his father save what his mother had chosen to tell him, and that little had not inculcated respect or affection. The letter, though tactful and kindly, seemed to him cold and formal,—somewhat "brutal," which was the adjective Mrs. Erroll had most frequently used to describe her husband. One sentence particularly rankled in his mind: "Should you come to live with me, opportunities for being with your mother will be rare."

"Confound it!" he muttered, "I won't go to live with him." Before the day was over he wrote a stiff little note declining his father's invitation, and cabled to his mother that he would meet her as usual in London at the end of June. The next day he received the following cable from Paris: "Delighted. All my love. Mudzie."

But the fact of the divorce rankled in his mind. The separation, the consciousness of a wrecked home in the background of his life, had been hard enough to bear, but divorce—! That seemed to him vulgar, humiliating, unnecessary. Some fresh instance of "brutality" must have driven his mother to that! something which she had unselfishly concealed from Laura. Poor dear Mudzie! he thought,

she had done her best always. And now she was indeed alone and in need of him! It was a brutality for his father to propose to buy his children from their mother. He felt he despised his father's money, and he could not understand Laura's willingness to come to New York. Well, even so, he would be loyal to his mother.

Within a day or two after the receipt of his father's letter Erroll was summoned to the Rectory one evening by Doctor Forester.

The Head stood before the empty fireplace and waved George into a chair. He spoke with an unwonted accent of embarrassment. "I may say at once, George," he began, "that I have been informed in confidence of the change in your family circumstances. Your father has written me freely of his proposition to you and of your reply. You are quite certain that you are wise to decline his invitation?"

George was exceedingly uncomfortable. "I have decided not to do so, sir, whether wisely or not. I wish to remain with my mother."

"Of course, my dear boy," Doctor Forester continued, "I have no wish to seem to thrust my advice upon you in this difficult and delicate situation. I do, however, very strongly urge you to see your father and have the talk with him that he requests, whatever you may feel will be your ultimate decision."

"Thank you, sir," Erroll replied, biting his lips

with mortification, "but I have quite made up my mind."

"Very well," replied the Doctor, "there is nothing more then to be said, save to express my opinion that you are acting most unwisely. In any case, your father is anxious that you should see your sister Laura before you go to Europe this summer."

"I hope to see my sister," said George, "but I cannot—I hope to see her."

"Mrs. Forester will be happy to ask Miss Erroll to stay with us over Prize Day and the dance, if you would like us to do so. We shall have other girls, so that nothing would be more natural."

"Sir, you are very kind. But I—I—if—"

"No, no, make no objections. Your father is an old acquaintance of mine. It is very fitting. I think it important that you and your sister should have the opportunity to talk matters over at your leisure,—as it were, on neutral ground. If Miss Erroll comes, it will be a great pleasure to Mrs. Forester and me."

George stammered his thanks. He hated having things arranged for him in this way, hated having his ugly family skeletons dragged into the light, even of this kindly old man's eyes, but he was grateful too for the Doctor's delicate consideration. And the prospect of Laura at the school was too bright and beautiful to be refused, whatever were his scruples.

The tenth of June, the day before Prize Day, had come at last. The hectic week of recovery from the defeat at Boxford, in which, alas! Erroll had had no chance, and of preparation for the festivities of the last days of term, was over. At four o'clock he was going in to Monday Port to meet Laura, and that night he, Pembroke, Meath, and three or four Sixth Formers were to dine at the Rectory where the Foresters were entertaining a bevy of girls.

Of course at the dinner he could not sit next to Laura, but was placed between Mrs. Forester and Miss Katherine Dale, the vivacious and pretty sister of one of the younger masters, and he was not a success. Miss Dale, after several ineffectual efforts to engage him in conversation, bestowed her attention on the youth at her right; and Mrs. Forester, after receiving courteous and irrelevant answers to a series of questions, mercifully left him to himself. She was sorry for his shyness. But it was not shyness this time that kept George silent. He could not keep his eyes or attention away from Laura, who sat opposite on Doctor Forester's right and next to Pembroke.

She was lovelier than ever, so young, so fresh, so beautiful. And every now and then across the flowers she threw a glance to him of such exquisite affectionate sympathy. And then she would turn her wonderfully clear blue eyes upon Pembroke, and smile. It was a smile that stirred something in Pem's heart that had never been stirred before. . . . She was simple, girlish, quite, quite

lovely, thought George; so modest, and yet so perfectly at ease; so facile, and yet so charmingly artless. And of course she was dressed as none of the others could hope to be, with a simplicity that is perfection for a young girl, and as she had laughingly told him in the hall, as he had kissed her and then held her away from him to admire, it was a simplicity that was also frightfully expensive. . . . He had never been so proud of her, never had he so absolutely adored her. . . .

After a strangely happy evening, during which he did not know that he had scarcely spoken, he walked back to Standerland with Ned Pembroke.

"Isn't she lovely, Pem?"

"My dear boy," laughed Ned, and he felt himself blushing in the dark, "I'm done for, quite; absolutely and forever.

"I wish you were, I wish you were!" cried George.

"Oh, I *am*," said Pem ruefully, "but I'd never have a chance."

"Why not? And she's as good, as wonderful, as she is lovely," continued Erroll. "I—I worship her. Nothing would suit me better than to have you two fall in love."

They threw their arms around each other's necks, and walked on into the night. The world seemed to them then a bright and beautiful place indeed.

Early the next morning George took Laura for a long walk, around the rocks by Whetstone, across the marshes and up the first of the ridges of Lovel's

Woods. He poured into her ears all his impressions and experiences of the past year, or listened eagerly to what she had to say of Paris and of New York.

"Why won't you," he exclaimed at last, "tell me whether you think I am right in going back to mother?"

"Because I don't know, dear," she answered, with a little sigh. "You must do as you think best in that. It seemed right both to Mudzie and me for me to come to Father. And I am happy, George dearest,—happier, I think, than I have ever been before. Poor dear Mudzie! I can't but realize now that she had not been quite fair to Father. I am growing so fond of him, coming so deeply to appreciate his patience, kindness, goodness. Won't you come and see him?"

George shrugged his shoulders. "Dearest, no; not till I have talked with Mudzie. It wouldn't be fair; you had that chance, you know. I am glad you like him and that you are going to be so happy here; but I had so much rather wait before I see him."

"I mustn't urge you," she said. "Father doesn't wish me to do so, Mudzie begged me not. Father wants you to come of your own free will, if you come at all; certainly you mustn't come for my sake. We will not be separated again in any case; he is too just, too good and kind to be willing that should happen."

Later in the morning the Prize Day exercises

were held in the great assembly room, and Laura was there. George could see her sitting well forward by Mrs. Forester's side, bright with interest in all that took place. She was waiting eagerly for a chance to applaud the beloved brother, but George's name was not called in the list of prize winners. The prefects for the following year were solemnly announced by the Head. Pembroke, who also had taken a prize, was one, and Douglas Ware, but again Laura was disappointed. "No chance of that!" George had already warned her. . . . A baseball game was played in the afternoon between the team and an improvised nine of Old Boys. George was in his flannels, but sat on the bench. Again Laura wondered—he seemed just to miss the honors of the school life. And at the dance that night he stood for most of the evening near the door among the crowd of fellows who were not taking part in the festivities.

Laura danced beautifully, like a bright young goddess dispensing favors. Pembroke was lucky more than once.

They had stopped for a moment and he had led her out of the warm bright gymnasium upon the cool moonlit terrace.

"You are George's best friend, aren't you?" she asked him unexpectedly.

"I am one of his best friends, certainly," he replied. "Perhaps I am his closest friend."

"No—his best, I should say," she repeated. "He has told me all about you, and about the others. I

have been watching, watching everything. And I want to say to you, Mr. Pembroke, that I am glad you are George's best friend. I can see that you are doing things, making the life here count, and yet having a good time too. That's what I want for George, and I confess I am a little disappointed; not in him, you understand, but disappointed that he hasn't done more. I can't help feeling that something is a little wrong. I know him so well. I don't think, you know, that he realizes what it is, or he would have told me. But nothing should keep him from making good here—isn't that what you say? You can't know how much it means to me. And you see to-day he has had no prizes, no prefectship; he didn't play in the game, though he was out there in his flannels; he doesn't dance."

"Oh, prizes!" murmured Pembroke, in a tone of deprecation.

"They are worth while. But it isn't just that he has not taken prizes or been awarded honors; it is something more subtle. For a while, last year it was, he was doing so well. I knew it from the way he wrote, from what he told me in vacations. He must go on."

"George means a lot to me, Miss Erroll. I care for him a great deal."

"Do you?" she asked, and smiled as though to say, In that case I shall care a great deal for you.

"But mayn't I have another dance?" he begged. "I know I'm not down on your card again, but—"

"My card? ah! does one have to keep strictly to

one's card? But there are encores. I shall save you—how many?"

"How many?" gasped Pem; "why——"

"Claim them," said Laura. "You see I have a great deal to say to you, and as I am leaving early to-morrow there will not be much opportunity."

"But we will meet——"

"Yes, we shall meet again surely. You see already we are old friends, is it not so? George's friends are mine."

CHAPTER XIV

MACGREGOR SOLVES A PROBLEM

AFTER the Long Vacation in England Erroll returned to Deal in September the day before school opened. Only a few of the boys were back, so when he dropped in during the evening to greet Mr. Deering, he found the master alone. They had been on good terms the year before, though things had not been quite the same between them since the unfortunate incident in the train.

Deering was in good form. His second year at Deal had gone well, and he returned with the keenness and zest that go so far toward making not only a popular but efficient master.

He asked, naturally, about Erroll's summer, and George gave him a somewhat detailed account of a reading party of Harrow boys that he had joined at a pretty little country rectory in Kent. All the while he was talking of the kindly old parson and the likable English fellows, he was feeling that in reality he had had a miserable summer and should like to say so. Deering's friendly glance was scrutinizing him a little closely, and he was in a mood to welcome sympathy.

"It sounds like a good vacation," said the mas-

ter, "but I can't help wishing, George, that you would spend your vacations over here. Except for school, you have passed most of your life abroad. But surely you mean to be an American."

"Of course I do," Erroll replied, "and, as far as I am concerned, I would be glad never to cross the ocean again. As a matter of fact I don't think I shall go over as often hereafter, for somewhat to my surprise this summer, almost as soon as I arrived, my mother married again. That was why I went off on the reading party."

"Really! I suppose that will make a difference."

"It will, indeed, sir. It puts me into rather a difficult situation." And before he realized he was giving his older friend a somewhat full analysis of his family affairs. He endeavored not to criticize either his father or mother, but Deering could read between the boy's words all the mortification and disappointment Mrs. Erroll's marriage had caused him.

"I should think," was his comment when the boy had concluded, "that now by far the wisest thing for you to do would be to get to know your father. I appreciate how difficult family troubles can make life; but I am afraid that you are letting your own pride stand in the way both of your interest and your happiness."

"Perhaps I am, sir; but, having declined my father's invitation as I did last spring, I can't bring myself to ask anything of him now. My mother was awfully generous in the way of allowance and

I've saved enough, I hope, to see me through the year. Perhaps, before I go to college, I may see my way to making some advances to my father; of course Laura's living with him will be a help. But I'd rather paddle my own canoe, so to speak, this year, anyway. It will be a tight squeeze, though; for my mother will not be able to do anything for me."

"You must go to college," said Deering; "I have been hoping to see you turn toward Kingsbridge."

"I have rather been doing that, sir. Of course Pem's going there makes a lot of difference."

"Let me see—you and Pembroke are to room together this year in the Old School, are you not?"

"Yes, sir—I am sorry to leave Standerland, but I shall like rooming with Pem."

"And Meath?"

"I—I don't know."

This was a sore subject, for Erroll had not told Meath definitely of his arrangement with Pembroke when Macgregor had asked him to share a room with him in Sixth Form year.

"I suppose I shall have Mac again, then," said Deering, with a smile. "Well, there is something in being used to him. But I am glad you are to room with Pembroke. I don't think, however, that you are quite right, George, to postpone the reconciliation with your father, though, naturally, you must decide for yourself. Whatever you do, I want to see you make this year count at school. You have come out a lot since I have been here, you know, but, after

all, you haven't hit it off in every respect, have you?"

"Rather not," admitted George. "I haven't really made good at anything I've tried."

"On the contrary, I should say, you have 'made good' at everything you've tried; but I want to see you do something more than just 'make good.' I am quite sure it is in you to accomplish much that is distinctly worth while."

"And I am afraid, Mr. Deering, that it is in me to accomplish a good deal less. I want things ever so desperately sometimes, but I am blind often as to the way I get them. It is like my stealing that Latin exam from Mr. Roylston."

"Ah, no! it is not blindness, George; it is headstrong self-will and a little cowardly fear of unpleasant consequences. You haven't quite conquered yourself yet. Perhaps most of us haven't. But we've got to try for it all the time. I think all life reduces just to this: sheer determination to do —to put it tritely—to do right. I wish you felt, as so many of us have who come to feel here, the power that religious faith and practice have to mold us into what we want to be."

"I don't know anything about religion," George replied. "I don't think I have ever thought very much about it. Church has never appealed to me."

"Perhaps not. Church, you know, is only the expression of it, only one of the means to it. Why don't you make an effort to enter into the religious

life of the school a bit—to think things out for yourself this year?"

"I don't disbelieve, you know; I just hardly ever think of such things."

"Try thinking," said Deering.

The next evening in Chapel at the opening service, though Pembroke was sitting next him and George was absorbed in the sense of pleasure at reunion with this intimate friend, he did try to think. For almost the first time in his life he made an effort to yield himself to the influences of the place and the service. His artistic appreciation, not too highly developed but superior to that of the average boy of his age, sensed the beauty of line and form in the fine Gothic chapel in which they worshiped, and of the light and color of its ornament and decoration. He could appreciate the rhythm and cadence of the Psalter and the simple straightforwardness of the Doctor's appeal for a good year. He wondered if it were just this withdrawal into quiet, this murmuring of old psalms and prayers, this singing of buoyant and stirring hymns, this expression of dependence on some power above and beyond them all, was what gave Deal School its definite character, its strange power to impress and to mold, to some extent, the personalities that made it up. He resolved that he would pay attention to the services that year and to the Doctor's talks in the class in Sacred Studies—think things out a bit, give religion a chance with him.

Pembroke had been confirmed the year before, but

they had never talked on these subjects. With other boys he had never spoken of serious or personal matters.

Meath, who had returned to school in the late afternoon, joined Erroll immediately after chapel.

"What's this mean, George," he began, after the briefest of greetings, "the aged Williams tells me that you are to have a room in the Old School with Ned Pembroke?"

There was nothing for George to do but admit the fact.

Macgregor promptly lost his temper. "I must say that I think that you have played me a rotten trick. I have been nourishing the delusion all summer that we were to room together."

"I never said so," George replied with a flush, realizing that he had not told Meath his plans as definitely as he could now wish that he had. As had been the case so often before, he had postponed the disagreeable.

"Perhaps you didn't say you would in so many words," rejoined Meath, "but you didn't so much as hint at the fact—as I daresay you knew it was—that you were to room with Pembroke."

"Maybe I didn't; but, at any rate, you have no right to assume that I meant to room with you. I didn't say that either."

"Why the dickens didn't you tell me like a man? Then I would have had a chance to get some one else: as it is I am dished."

"I am sorry I didn't," said George lamely,

"blamed sorry, Mac. I just thought that something would turn up that would make it easier——"

"Oh, you just thought, did you? Played the same selfish game you've always played. You use a fellow for what he is worth, and when you've squeezed him dry throw him over for some one else that will be of more advantage. By jove, I don't understand you. Or, rather, my friend, I understand you too well. You're a blamed coward, that's what you are! I have always known it, and confound it! I ought to have thrown you over before I lost half my friends by sticking up for you. I made you in this school, don't you know it,—I—Macgregor Meath."

"Yes, you've done a lot for me. I admit that, and I've been grateful. But as for losing friends by sticking up for me, that simply isn't true, and you know it."

"Didn't I lose Donald Grafton?"

"You quarreled with Grafton about me, yes; but you and he had been on the outs for nearly a year before, more or less. I am blamed sorry I didn't tell you definitely that I intended to room with Pembroke; but you can't blame me——"

"For preferring him to me? Oh, no! I am so chock full of the virtue of humility that I just love the opportunity you have given me to exercise it. Thank you, George, ever so much; you have done me a good turn and I won't forget it. Give my love to Pem, will you? or, perhaps, after all, you're not to room with him. There's Barton, you know—the

Head Prefect—it might really be more to your advantage to room with Barton." And, with an unconcealed sneer, Meath turned away and left Erroll alone.

George was humiliated and annoyed: humiliated that he had not had the courage definitely to tell Meath his plans in the spring, annoyed with Macgregor for exposing and ridiculing his weakness.

He made a clean breast of it all to Pembroke that night as they were settling in their comfortable rooms in the Old School.

"Of course," was Ned's practical comment, "you made a mistake in not telling Mac frankly that you were to room with me. But you didn't do so; and, however you may blame yourself for that, it remains a fact that you are not under the slightest obligation to room with him. To tell you the truth, if Mac cools off a bit in consequence of this, I, for one, shall not be sorry. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

"By the by," he continued, "a piece of good luck has just happened to you. Reed isn't coming back this year, so the business managership of the Lit is vacant, and Jack Barton was just in here to tell me they are going to offer it to you."

"That's bully!" exclaimed George. "I would rather have got on the editorial board, but, as long as I didn't do that, it's mighty decent of them to give me the job. I'll be glad to do something for the Lit, though I doubt if I've much of a head for business."

"It won't be hard," said Pem; "everything is working O. K., for Reed was a corking manager last year. All you will have to do is to make deposits and sign checks and try to persuade the editors to get the sheet out on time. One of the good things about it is that you will be in the Dealonian Council and that's quite worth while."

Once the school was in full swing George appreciated this. The Sixth Form were accorded a real authority at Deal, with corresponding liberties and privileges. The Dealonian Council, consisting of the six prefects and all Sixth Formers who held offices in the various organizations, formed an executive committee, which practically ran the school. Erroll had never considered himself a candidate for a prefectship, partly because his natural shyness prevented him from picturing himself in a position of leadership, partly because he had unconsciously imbibed some of Macgregor Meath's contempt for authority.

In the lower school Meath had achieved leadership as a consequence of this attitude; and in the upper school had lost it for the same reason. The Fifth and Sixth Forms of most schools instinctively realize that their own interests are best secured by a firm alliance with the powers that be. Meath had not learned the lesson, despite the rude shocks of the previous year.

It was significant that the only members of the Insufferable Six who attained the dignity of prefects were those who had definitely broken with

Meath—Pembroke and Ware. Grafton had also broken, it is true, but he missed the appointment because he was considered hot-headed and impulsive.

As the term went on Erroll began to realize how much probably his intimacy with Meath had cost him. Had there been no Macgregor in the background of his life, with Pembroke's friendship, he began to believe he might have attained whatever he had set his mind and heart upon. But, despite this, he felt, on the other hand, that he owed Meath a debt of gratitude for originally dragging him out of his seclusion and that it would be ungenerous not to recognize that debt now when the old leader was discredited and was growing unpopular.

Meath did not long maintain his contemptuous attitude toward Erroll. Within the week after their exchange of angry words on the campus he had come round, begged George's pardon for his sarcasm and spleen, and professed to be completely appeased by Erroll's warmly expressed regret for having caused him any inconvenience. But, despite the healing of the breach, the realization that he and Erroll had practically exchanged positions was wormwood in his mouth. He was irritable and fault-finding and often betrayed his resentment, for he had found it more difficult to receive than to give. It requires a great deal of humility for the man who has lost a fortune to receive from others the favors that he formerly dispensed himself.

Meath's analysis of his position in the school at the beginning of his last year was not reassuring.

He began, recalling his military metaphor, to regard the dissolution of the Kappa Upsilon as, indeed, a retreat from Russia. He had risked a campaign with Erroll as an issue, and had been defeated by an opponent for whose intellectual abilities he had genuine contempt. Though the violent quarrel between Grafton and himself had been patched up, they had practically ignored each other throughout Fifth Form year.

After the episode about the rooming arrangements Meath began to feel that he had made another mistake in strategy by his close alliance with Erroll the previous year. He had gained nothing from the intimacy, Erroll apparently had gained everything. Though he had been technically right in blaming Erroll for lack of frankness, Meath had never for a moment supposed that he would not room with Pembroke. He knew that his one chance of securing Erroll as a roommate was to create in his friend's mind a sense of obligation. Accordingly, he had deliberately refrained from pressing Erroll for a definite decision in the spring. By his reproaches in September he had succeeded in making Erroll feel guilty but not to the extent of breaking his agreement with Pembroke. The failure of his schemes made Meath bitter and malicious.

Having at length resolved on a new line of action, he inaugurated the campaign by dropping in casually one evening upon Donald Grafton. Polly Teal fortunately was out, and Donald was struggling with a refractory problem in trigonometry.

"Hello, Mac," he exclaimed with surprise as he recognized his visitor, "this is an unexpected pleasure. I'm getting brain fag over this trig."

"Wool fag, you mean," retorted Meath, flashing a glance of the old time raillery at his former crony. He was relieved when Grafton laughed good-naturedly.

"Here, let me have a go at it." He bent over the back of Donald's chair, resting one hand on the boy's shoulder, while with the other he took the pencil, and, after a moment's thought, indicated on the paper the solution of the problem.

"Thanks," said Grafton; "that sets my mind at rest. I can do the others all right. Sit down."

Macgregor chose the couch and curled up comfortably among the pillows. They exchanged perfunctory and desultory remarks about the summer vacation, but beneath their embarrassment there was better feeling than had shown itself between them for a long time. Meath, as with sensitive nostrils, scented the change. All things come to him who waits, he reflected, and blamed himself for having been impatient. Between his remarks, as of old, he plumed himself, and found the experience delicious, as the recall of a long-forgotten but delightful sensation. Again he conceived himself as the man who would come back.

"Do you know, Graf," he said at last, "that I dropped in to see you to-night with malice aforethought, with fell and deliberate purpose?"

Donald glanced at the lank slight figure sprawled

upon the couch, at the freckled quizzical face, the somewhat tousled reddish head resting upon the palms of his hands, the keen light blue eyes blinking through disfiguring spectacles. Somehow it seemed rather nice to have old Mac about again talking more or less over his head.

"Well," he said, with a little embarrassed laugh, "knowing you of old, Macgregor, I usually go on the theory that you do everything with a purpose. Not an artless violet, you!"

"No, a flower is the last phenomenon of nature with which to compare me, and violets of all flowers are least in my line,—their sickly sentimental perfume gives me a pain in the very midst of Little Mary. And yet, Graf, I'm not without a touch of sentiment; and it is just that touch, lingering in me world-sick heart, that brings me here to-night." He had risen partially to give effect to his words, uttered in a half-bantering, half-dramatic tone. "Do you remember the Kappa Upsilon?"

"Do I remember the Kappa Upsilon?" exclaimed Donald. "Good old Kappa Up. I tell you, Mac, I've missed it a lot. Good old times, eh?"

"Good old times!" echoed Macgregor, "good old days of the Consul Plancus. I miss 'em too. If you'll recollect, since then you and I have been—shall we say?—not quite in such rapport as once we were."

"I suppose we haven't quite got over what we both blurted out that night. I've always been sorry that we split."

"And I, Don, and I! But I come to-night to render a belated justice. Remember we split on the fact that you insisted on blackballing Erroll, which, of course, you had a perfect right to do and that I didn't dispute even then. And when I demanded your reasons, and you gave 'em straightforwardly enough, I went up in the air—dear, dear! we called each other names, didn't we,—names, I remember I said, gentlemen couldn't forget."

"One doesn't forget," said Donald, "but we withdrew them. I was sorry to have lost my head."

"Ah, yes," exclaimed Meath, "but we couldn't withdraw the hard feeling they engendered, could we? It persisted, more or less, all last year, didn't it? and, in consequence, the Kappa Up is but a glorious memory; even the Insufferable Six, Graf, is a tradition which already the lower school has forgotten. Pem and Ware are giddy gaudy prefects, you and Polly hang out still under the old sign, Tom's more or less drifted away, and I am the same miserable sinner I always was. Sic transit gloria mundi."

"Say—translate."

"I beg pardon, old chap; I forgot that classical allusions always bore you. So passes the glory of the world. But I came, I said, to render you a belated act of justice, to write myself down before you as an ignoramus and a jackass; to confess that for once you were right and that I, in spite of my infinitely superior culture, philosophy and religion, was hopelessly wrong. I couldn't see your point

that night—I see it now only too clearly,—and too late!"

"What the deuce are you driving at?"

"Ah! I see, my boy, that one must still reduce one's ideas to lowest terms, express them in words of one syllable, in order to get them through that nice thick cushion of lambs' wool that embalms your brain. I mean, in short, about Erroll."

"Oh, I see. You——"

"I have come in that respect to see that you were right—right to take the attitude you did about him."

"I'm glad you have. It was rotten to have to blackball him for the Kappa Up. I never much liked him, but I didn't want to be on bad terms with him; above all, I didn't want to get on bad terms with you fellows because of him."

"I have liked him," said Macgregor. "I would be willing to confess myself to ordinary irregularities of conduct. Such things as you openly alleged, at least the instances you gave to prove them, wouldn't much have affected me. But all the time I suspected that you had some particular instance up your sleeve that you were just too darn white to use. I suspected, but I wouldn't give you credit for it. You see, I didn't know then what it was. Now—well, I understand; I appreciate your action and no longer blame you. I came to-night just to say that; to say I hope you will really let by-gones be by-gones. You see, coming to feel about Erroll as I have has thrown me back upon my old friends, made me value them more."

"I certainly am glad you do understand, Mac, for I would never have told you, or any one, in fact. Yet, knowing what I did, I couldn't act otherwise. I just couldn't stomach having him in our club. Why, the fellow's a—— But, look at here, how did you get on?"

"One thing and another has led up to it. It will be easy to understand when you know it all. But what I can't see is how you got on to it when you did. How the deuce did you happen to? Fair exchange, you know!"

"It was queer,—a mere accident. It was away back in Fourth Form year, just at the time of the mid-years. I had been over at Howard House one day to see Tom. Just as I was coming out of his room I spied Erroll leaving Gumshoe Ebenezer's study. He went on down the corridor quickly, apparently without noticing me at all. When I got on the campus he must have been twenty or thirty yards ahead of me. Half way across I saw a paper fall out of a book he was carrying. I stooped to pick it up and glanced at it to see if it was anything he would want. It wasn't folded; well——"

"Of course, it was the paper?"

"Yes, Gumshoe's Latin exam for the next day. I didn't know what to do with it. I was about to call Erroll, then, suddenly, it flashed on me that it was suspicious, and I dropped it again and started back to Howard. I wanted to see if the Gumshoe was in his study."

"And was he?"

"No. But before that, as I was turning in Howard, I glanced around. Erroll had missed the paper and had come back to find it. I saw him pick it up again and go off with it. I was darned sure then that he had swiped it some way. And the next day, in the Cicero exam, I watched him, in fact I sat in the seat next him. I don't know what had happened, but Gumshoe gave him a different exam from the rest of us. Ours was printed, you may remember; his was written out in the Gumshoe's handwriting. What do you suppose had happened?"

"Ah! let me think, let me think," exclaimed Macgregor. "Gumshoe must have discovered it and let him off. Darned unlikely, I suppose you think, but I have always believed that old codger had a drop or two of the milk of human kindness."

"Well, that's what I supposed. Coupled with the fact that I knew he cribbed when he got a chance, I felt dead certain that he had stolen that paper. I feel dead certain still. And that, of course, was the real reason I blackballed him for the Kappa Up. I could have swallowed the cribbing, but I was hanged if I'd have a thief in the club."

"I see, I see. And you knew this all the time?"

"Of course I knew it; how could I forget it?"

"But you never gave so much as a hint."

"I wasn't a custodian of morals, as you're fond of saying. What was it to me? I wouldn't peach on the kid; but when it came to taking him into the society, calling him brother and all that, know-

ing this about him—well, I just couldn't stand for it."

Meath had thrown himself back again upon the couch, hands across his eyes, and was thinking rapidly. "Just a minute," he said. "Do you remember a conversation that you and I had once on the ice during hockey practice about Erroll?"

"Around that time, eh? Yes, it was about Erroll and Deering. Several months after that I asked if you remembered, and you pretended you had forgotten."

"Yes, yes, I know, I know," Meath replied quickly, "but there was no point then in saying anything about it. I was groping in the dark. You remember I said I was going to solve a problem, find out why Erroll had so suddenly cottoned to Deering. Well, I tried; cultivated him; then I got to like him, and forgot about it. Then things began to happen—one thing after another. I recalled my feeling about it, began to get curious. But I never found out until—just recently. Deering knew about the exam, take my word for it, and in some way staved off the Gumshoe's wrath. I don't know how, but I'd wager my head that is a fact. Oh, I've been thinking lately!"

"But how did you get on to the swiping of the exam?"

"I didn't absolutely. It was this way: mind, this is in strict confidence!—but I gradually waked up to the sort of thing he was capable of. To cap the climax this year he played me a rotten trick. We

had words, made accusations against each other. I was sore, and threw up everything I knew or guessed at. Fact is, he practically gave himself away; but I wasn't sure of details till I had this talk with you. But I had seen enough to realize that the only fair thing for me to do was to come to you and have it out; try to make things right, for, of course, if I had known then,—well, the good old Kappa Up would still be going, I guess. The Kappa Up's gone, but, by jove! I want to make things right with you."

"I'm darned glad you came, Mac. It always made me sore to quarrel with you about him."

"That's over now, thank heaven!" Meath reached over, grabbed Grafton's hand, and wrung it. "By jove; by jove!" he continued, as he leaped from the couch and began to pace up and down the room, "and you knew all the time!"

"Of course," said Grafton again, "how could I forget?"

Meath regarded his host with undisguised admiration. "And I have made the assertion, Graf, that your brains were made of wool! By George, man, I withdraw the allegation, as it were, on bended knees. I crawl. I apologize. I proclaim myself an ass—I, Macgregor Meath. You have it on me completely. I am the Sixth Form jackass, successful competitor against Polly Teal."

At this instant the door opened and Teal entered.

"Speaking of angels or asses," observed Macgregor, "behold who is here!"

"Hello, Mac," cried Polly in surprise; "quite a stranger."

"But a stranger no longer, Polly, dear," rejoined Meath. "Graf and I have just exchanged the kiss of peace."

"Good work. Say—not going?"

"Must. Work calls, you know. I haven't done that beastly trig; neither have you."

"Sit down, then," said Polly, "and give us a lift."

Macgregor smiled, but seated himself obediently at the desk. "All right. Fire away now. Let me hear the problem." He took pencil and paper, prepared to do the figuring. Grafton read the problem, but Meath could not get his attention upon it, the solution he had just made of a larger problem thrilled him. "Hang it!" he exclaimed; "read it again, will you?"

Grafton did so and in a moment all three were working vigorously. At length the lesson was finished.

"By the bye, Mac," said Polly, "do you still line your pockets with chocolate?"

"No," Meath replied; "but I line my larder with foods for the gods. Come over and we'll raid it."

Fifteen minutes later they were in Meath's room in Standerland feasting to their hearts' content.

"By jove, Poll!" exclaimed Meath, "it does my heart good to see you eat. Reminds me of the good old days of yore."

"And me!" said Polly with his mouth full.

"Since the Kappa Upsilon broke up I've been on the verge of starvation. Can't get enough to keep me going. See those arms!"

"Pitiful!" murmured Macgregor.

"And my legs!" He pulled up his trousers.

"Ye gods! You poor dear, have another red herring, do! Didst think, because thou wert virtuous, there were no more cakes and ale?"

CHAPTER XV

A FRIEND IN NEED

THE solution of his problem quite restored Macgregor's good spirits. The possession of Erroll's secret gave him an advantage that almost compensated for the resentment he had felt about the rooming episode at the opening of term. New vistas opened before the eye of his imagination. He felt again a warm interest in Erroll and a renewed liking for him, and he promptly set about to dispel from George's mind all traces of the dispute. For a time he seemed his old artless self.

He was speedily successful in restoring intimacy. He loafed about with George in the afternoons, went for long walks with him, worked with him, and dropped into his rooms in the Old School almost every evening.

"I hadn't the heart to throw him over," he explained to Grafton; and Donald believed more sincerely in Macgregor's heart than he ever had before.

"Blamed white of you, Mac, I swear; I wish I were as decent."

Macgregor strove also to make himself agreeable

to Pembroke, whom he often encountered in the Old School; but he could not fail to realize that his charm for Pembroke was gone. He was relieved when Pem took to working in the library of evenings and left him and Erroll in undisputed possession of the study.

George had started in the year by working hard both at his books and at football. With diligence he would have made a highly successful scholar, for, despite linguistic deficiencies, his keen literary perceptions did much to compensate in the opinions of his masters for his inaccuracy. In football he had no chance of making anything except the scrub or a house team, but he played diligently and did his best. The management of the *Deal Literary Magazine* occupied a good deal of his time and interest, though he had little difficulty save in the effort to collect some long outstanding bills for advertising which the former manager had neglected.

He also made frequent contributions to its pages, bits of verse of a somewhat melancholy character often, but expressed with considerable technical skill and felicity of phrase that won for him a good deal of appreciation from the masters and a few of the older boys. Perhaps the verses that were most liked—Deering in particular congratulated him warmly upon them—were a few lines published in the *Lit.* that year which had for their subject Deigr Light, whose alternate red and white flashes were always visible from the School at night.

"A ruby intermittent glow,
A momentary gleam of white,
They seem to say, 'I wateh, I know
Thy rest at night.'

"A star that wavereth in the dark,
A band of gold across the deep;
My day is done; its place they mark
Before I sleep.

"So keep they faith the long night through,
Nor weary till the golden day:
May I as they to faith be true
In work and play."

Unfortunately, it is sometimes much easier to feel and express noble, or even beautiful, sentiments than it is to put them into practice. As Erroll grew more and more absorbed in writing and in the management of the magazine, the temptation to neglect or slight his class-room work became more frequent and more keen. It was not to his advantage, though he believed it to be, that Meath should have got quite into the way of doing a good part of his work for him. Pembroke preferred to study alone and for this reason had chosen the library, which would have troubled Erroll had not Macgregor been continuously at hand to distract his attention. Then, too, just the consciousness of rooming with Pembroke meant a great deal.

The fall term seemed to pass like a flash, to have been but one long warm golden afternoon. They were talking about the Christmas vacation before they had finished unpacking.

One evening Pembroke and Erroll were alone in their study. Macgregor had gone, and they were about to turn in.

"What about the vacation, George? I hope you will spend it with me in Washington. Of course, if you are going to your father or have arranged to be with Laura, I shall understand; but I'd like to have you immensely."

"I am not going to be with my father," Erroll replied, "for I haven't changed my mind since I told you how things stood at the beginning of term. I'd like to be with Laura, but I can't manage that except by seeing her occasionally for an afternoon or evening in New York."

"When you pass through New York, you mean; for, in that case, you are coming home with me."

"I would certainly like to, Pem; but I have promised to spend the vacation in New York with Mac. You see I do want to see Laura as much as possible; I've got some Lit business to attend to there; and I wouldn't like hanging out at a hotel for two weeks alone, so Mac's proposition just suited me."

Pembroke flushed and his face darkened. He was not a jealous friend, but this arrangement struck him as excessively inconsiderate. George had gone home with him the previous Easter, and he had taken it for granted that he would do so again at Christmas.

"I can't see the sense of staying two weeks in New York. Will Mac's people allow him to do that?"

"Oh, Mac's people allow him to do just about what he wants."

"Yes, I fancy they do. But I think you might have asked me. I——" But he could not bring himself to finish the sentence. He would not have George suppose that he was jealous of Meath, nor would he give the impression that he would like to have stayed in New York for the sake of seeing Laura Erroll.

"I'm sorry, Pem. I'll come down for a few days."

"Don't bother," exclaimed Pembroke. "I don't want to interfere with your plans to be with Meath. Confound it! I'm sick of Meath. Think I am jealous if you like; but it isn't that. I have been sick of him for years. I can't understand your friendship for him. I can't stand him near me."

"So that's why you've been cutting out at nights, eh?" asked George irritably.

"If you want to know the truth, it is."

"I think you might have been more open about it. What's the matter with Mac?"

"I detest him. He is a poor little runt, false as Satan; rotten spirit; a self-seeking little brute."

"I say! you're too blamed hard on him. You've developed these opinions mighty suddenly, for you and he used to be as thick as peas."

"Yes, and that's why I know him so well. I have thought pretty much the same thing about Meath for the last year or so. What's more, I can't help seeing the rotten influence he has on you."

"Rotten influence on me! You talk as though I were a kid in the First Form. I think I'm old enough to withstand Mac's influence. As a matter of fact, except you, he's been the best friend I've had in this school. If it hadn't been for Mac, you and I would never have known each other."

"Perhaps not. But much as I think of our friendship, maybe it wouldn't have been such a bad thing if we hadn't known each other."

"Oh, that's the way you feel about it, is it?"

"Don't misunderstand me; I mean it doesn't seem to me that our friendship offsets the disadvantages of your intimacy with Meath. It isn't just the fact of your going off with him on this vacation, and it isn't jealousy. But look back over the past nine months, man: you might as well have roomed with him. I tell you, George, I can't stand it again next term."

"I can't throw Mac over," Erroll replied. "Ordinary decent gratitude ought to keep me loyal to him, if nothing less. But don't let us quarrel about him. I—I——"

"We won't quarrel," Pembroke interrupted, repenting a little his strong language; "but I can't pretend not to mind when I realize how ever since I have known you Mac's influence has been rotten."

"There you go again, Pem—as if I were a child and couldn't take care of myself."

"That isn't it at all. I felt the same way about myself. It was just to fail in what I had made up my mind to be, or to break with Mac. You can

knock off intimacy without giving offense—at least, without having a row. I succeeded in that and it is what I'd like to see you do."

"I can't, Pem; I should feel like a traitor."

"All right. I've said my say. Anyway, I hope you will get down to Washington for a few days."

"Why don't you come to New York? That would be——"

"No, I can't do that. I'm sorry. Get Laura down here in the spring again, if you can."

This conversation did not add to the pleasure with which George looked forward to the holidays. The proposal to spend the vacation in New York had come originally from Meath, but Erroll had promptly fallen in with it, because it meant the opportunity of seeing Laura without as yet compromising with his father, and also because he wished to collect some outstanding debts owed to the *Deal Literary Magazine*. He was used to hotel life, he liked theaters, restaurants, and the sensation of Bohemianism which life in a great city gave him. It had not occurred to him that Pem would resent his plans, but if Ned had not based his protest on Meath's supposedly bad influence, he would have listened more patiently and, undoubtedly, would have cut short his stay in New York and gone to Washington. But he felt that he had treated Macgregor badly in the matter of rooms and that Mac had been singularly decent not to resent it. Much as he would have preferred Washington, he was quite resolute about going to New York.

He and Meath left on the day school closed as they had planned. They stayed, as was characteristic of them both, at an expensive hotel, at which they lived well. Erroll's instinctive distaste for vulgarity kept them from any deliberate or extreme dissipation, but they spent their entire time in seeking amusement, and the very circumstances under which they lived were demoralizing.

For the first time in his life, when Laura met him one morning at the hotel and they went for a walk in the park, he found her critical and disapproving. She thought him quite unreasonable in refusing to see his father, and she insisted that meeting as they had in a hotel was undignified on their part and unfair toward Mr. Erroll.

"I was so weary, George, dear," she said, "of all this sort of thing in Europe. I was so glad to escape it all when I came here. It has been so splendid to be able to be simple and open and frank, that meeting you like this and saying nothing to father about it is so distasteful to me that I simply can not do it again. If you wish to see me you must do so openly. If you do not realize the propriety and the duty of becoming reconciled to father, you will simply succeed, my dear, in separating us from each other. I think you are very headstrong and foolish in your attitude toward father; and this way of spending your vacation with that horrid little Meath is preposterous. I do not understand how you can afford to do it."

"I told you I had saved enough out of the allow-

ance mother gave me last summer to see me through this year. I am sorry you feel as you do, Laura, for I shall not change my attitude as long as I am at school."

"You are very much to blame. If you insist on being unreasonable, you must put up with the fact that I also have my prejudices and principles and that I do not mean to change either."

"It is you who are unreasonable, Laura."

"Very well, then," she replied; "we will have to let it go at that."

And to his intense annoyance she refused to see him again while he was in New York.

George spent several mornings looking up the *Lit.'s* creditors and persuading them to immediate payment, with the result that he succeeded in collecting nearly a hundred dollars. This alone seemed to justify the New York visit. At the end of the first week, however, he said something to Meath about going on to Washington and spending the last few days of the vacation with Pembroke.

"I like that," was Meath's comment. "After I offend my people to an unconscionable degree by not going home and the guvnor and mother have gone south, you calmly propose to leave me stranded in the middle of the vacation. But go, of course, if you want to."

"I won't go if you feel like that about it. But, to tell the truth, Mac, this is too darned expensive. I've spent as much this week as I counted on spending during the entire holidays."

"We will be more economical."

"By jove! we have got to be."

So they decided to stay on for the second week, and by way of practicing economy they spent twenty-five cents apiece on their luncheons that day; with the consequence that they were so hungry in the evening that they indulged in quite the most gorgeous dinner that they had yet had. The bill was appalling, but fortunately they were dining at their own hotel and could sign the slip. It is remarkable how little seems to be spent when no cash appears in the transaction. The intention to be economical did not contend successfully against the allurements of credit. It mattered very little to Meath how much they spent, and George, foolishly affected by his companion's carelessness, refused to reckon the amounts for which he was signing up day by day. Like his mother, he cherished an inveterate notion that at the last moment something would always happen to solve a difficulty. It was a theory that on the whole experience had seemed to justify.

When the last morning arrived and separate bills were made out and presented to them, Erroll was staggered by the length and amount of his. For the moment he wildly imagined that the hotel management had made some absurd mistake. He withdrew into the little writing-room and scanned the paper anxiously, scrutinizing each item; but, with all the desire in the world, he could discover no errors, he could not be sure that in a single in-

stance he had been charged for anything which he had not enjoyed. Eighty-three dollars and sixty-four cents—the amount was absurd! He looked at the roll of bills in his wallet, and, deducting the ninety dollars that belonged to the *Lit.*, he could count on scarcely ten dollars of his own. His ready money had been spent on theaters, taxicabs, cigars, neckties,—a hundred extravagances. In addition to other foolishnesses he had purchased a typewriter which had been sent on to Deal. He looked at his check book and gave a sigh of relief when he saw that it recorded a balance of ninety-eight dollars, but the sigh ended in a groan of despair, as he suddenly realized that he had not deducted the last week's hotel bill of seventy-six dollars and twenty-two cents, which he had paid by check. This left him twenty-one dollars and eighty-eight cents in the bank at Monday Port. The necessity of meeting liabilities amounting to over eighty dollars, with assets valued at thirty, is not a pleasant situation.

At last, in his quandary, he went to Meath.

"See here, Mac; I've been darned foolish and spent more money than I have either in cash or in the bank at Monday Port. Can you lend me enough to pay this bill? I'll return it as soon as I have heard from mother."

"How much is it?" asked Meath, who had already paid his own bill and was seeing to their luggage.

"Eighty-three dollars and odd cents."

"Phew!" exclaimed Meath, "we have been going

it, haven't we? I had no idea we had spent so much; but mine was even larger. I'm darned sorry, but I've scarcely got enough money to see me back to school."

"What the deuce am I going to do? Can't you cash a check?"

"I don't keep a bank account. The guvnor just gives me what I ask for."

Erroll sat down on the bed and looked disconsolately about the somewhat disordered but luxurious apartment they had shared.

"What the dickens *am* I to do?"

"How much are you shy?"

"Fifty or sixty dollars."

"Give 'em a check and make a deposit when you get back to school."

"But I haven't any money at school. I won't have till I hear from my mother."

"There's your sister, won't she——"

"I can't ask her; she would have to go to my father; I won't do that. I would a darn sight rather go to prison for debt."

"Oh, that sort of thing has gone out of fashion. They can't do anything but hold your trunk and raise a stink down at school. You can borrow it when you get back."

"Of whom?"

"Of me. I'll write home and get some money. Sure. Look at here," he exclaimed suddenly, "take that money you collected for the Lit, pay the bill,

and when I get my check I'll lend you what you need and you can settle up."

"But, good heavens, that isn't my money!"

"Of course it isn't, but it won't matter if you borrow it for a few days, will it? Nobody will ever know the dif. I tell you I will write home and get the money."

"Confound it!" cried Erroll petulantly, "why the deuce did we stay? I wish I hadn't come at all. I ought to have gone to Washington."

"Don't cry over spilt milk. Of all forms of human weakness that gets most on my nerves. You've eaten your cake, so don't jaw because you can't have it too, but be glad you got some fun. I tell you I will lend you the money in a few days, so use that Lit money till then, for you can't let these hotel chaps hold your trunk and write a disgusting lot of rot down to school. There'd be the dickens to pay! Get a move on, for we've got to catch that ten o'clock train."

"You swear you will lend it to me?"

"The guvnor never refused me yet. Don't pull such a long face about it; it will work out all right."

Erroll saw nothing else to do. He went down to the office of the hotel, took the roll of bills that belonged to the *Lit.*, and paid the account. At ten o'clock they took the train for Monday Port.

For the next few days George worried himself half ill over the matter. He irritated Meath excessively by repeatedly asking him if he had written home and then if he had not heard from his father.

Several days passed and, in the meanwhile, it was necessary for him to discuss the financial condition of the *Lit.* with Barton, the editor-in-chief.

"How about the little bills you were to collect in New York?" Barton asked. "Any luck?"

"I got the promise of their being paid. I hope to get the money in a few days."

"We can't go ahead on this anniversary number unless you do get them paid," continued Barton. "Hurry 'em up again, will you? We want to get that number out and make it a bully one."

"I'll write again at once."

After this conversation Erroll went at once to Meath. "I've got to have that money, Mac. Barton wants to get out a special anniversary number of the Lit, and we can't afford to do it if those bills are not paid. I've put him off for a day or so, but he will be at me again. I can't go on lying; I've got to straighten out that account. I've cabled to my mother."

"Well, I'm deucedly sorry, old chap, but I can't help you out just yet. I had a letter from the guvnor this morning, and he's as sore as a pup about my not coming home. Says he won't send me a cent till the first of the month. You shall have it then."

"That's two weeks off. What the deuce can I do in the meantime?"

"Get Pem to lend——"

"Pem hasn't got it; he gets only a small allow-

ance. And we have got to decide at once about that anniversary issue."

"Well, tell Barton you couldn't collect it."

"That's a lie."

"Spose it is, haven't you lied to him already? What are you going to do otherwise,—tell Barton that you borrowed it and can't pay it back? Ask the Lit to trust you?"

Erroll bit his finger-nails nervously. "Of course, I can't do that. Gosh! you've got me into a nice hole."

"I've got you into a hole! I like that. Why blame me?"

"Because it was a darn fool stunt—going to New York at all. It was still more foolish to stay at the hotel we did, for I couldn't afford it and you knew I couldn't. We spent money right and left. I'd rather have had a row with the hotel than a mess here with the Lit. Why the dickens did you ever propose my taking that money?"

"Oh, for gosh' sake, let up. You're old enough to take care of yourself, or you ought to be. I'm not a trained nurse nor a governess, nor do I propose to be held responsible for your taking that Lit money."

"If you hadn't promised to lend me enough to settle up you know I wouldn't have taken it. How could I? I told you I hadn't any money here."

"I meant what I said. I will let you have it the first of the month. If you can't tide things over till then, why I'll confess that I have overestimated

your talent for ingenious explanations. Now don't be a fool—just tell Barton you couldn't collect. By the first of the month I will have my check; perhaps before that you will have heard from your mother."

"I hope so," said Erroll miserably. But that he was not destined to do for some time to come.

He would have gone to Pembroke, but he knew that Ned did not have the money to lend him. At last, seeing nothing for it, when Barton asked him again he told him that he had not been able to collect.

"That's queer," said the editor-in-chief, "for they are all reputable firms. I think I'll ask my father to drop them a line." The elder Barton was a New York lawyer.

"I wouldn't do that," Erroll exclaimed apprehensively. "They have promised to pay by the first of the month. I'm sure we will get it out of them."

"You think it safe for me to go ahead then with the big number?"

"Sure; go ahead. I'm certain of the money."

But, in truth, he had begun to doubt Meath's good intentions in the matter. Pembroke, he suspected, had been right about Meath . . . But from whom he was to borrow, if Macgregor failed him, he did not know; and of what might be the consequences, should his situation be discovered, he dared not think.

CHAPTER XVI

A CRISIS

ERROLL had not forgotten his conversation with Mr. Deering at the beginning of the year, in which the master had advised him "to try thinking." He had given close attention to the Doctor's talks in the Sacred Studies class and had done much of the recommended reading. In the religious void of his mind a chaos had formed, and out of the chaos was gradually evolving a not wholly inadequate conception of Christianity as a power in human history and human life. But there had as yet been no question of his personal submission to the Church or to the deeper if vaguer ideas for which the Church stood. Then had come the demoralizing holidays and the week of worry after his return, during which religious ideas had never entered his head. But they were unexpectedly to revive.

One Sunday evening at Chapel, soon after the Christmas vacation, Doctor Forester detained the upper school after the regular evensong. He retired to remove his surplice and tippet and then returned and took a position almost in their midst at the head of the aisle.

"As you all doubtless know," he said, "it is the

custom of the Bishop to visit the School once a year for the purpose of administering confirmation. He will come this year on the last Sunday of the term, and a preparation class will be formed at once. I want all boys who have decided to be confirmed or are thinking of confirmation to come to the meetings of the class and also to find occasion for a personal talk with me. As you know I never urge individual boys to be confirmed, but I do urge all who are still unconfirmed to think seriously of the matter; for it means taking a stand for God and the right and asking his grace to help you keep your resolution.

"You must not feel that you are obliged to undergo any peculiar religious experience to fit you for confirmation. Any boy who is trying to live honestly, cleanly, kindly, who wishes to love and serve God, is a proper candidate for confirmation. On the other hand, I must warn you that it is not necessary for you to be assured of your own goodness or worthiness. If there be any boy here who is struggling against temptation to any evil or dishonorable thing, if there be any boy who has yielded and is sorry, he may be the very one who most needs the help that so might be given him. Please bear the subject in mind, give it your earnest consideration, and let me know your decision as soon as may be. Let us sing before we go Hymn Six Hundred and Six, 'Just as I am, without one plea.' "

As the Doctor uttered the words "if there be any boy who has yielded and is sorry," Erroll felt the

hot blood surge into his cheeks and a wave of bitter regret and humiliating shame pass over him. For the second time in his life he had given way to a tawdry vulgar sin under temptation. He was a thief! He felt as if he were about to sink down on the floor of the pew and weep his heart out in despair. But, instead, they were all on their feet, the organ was rolling out the prelude of the hymn, and then they began to sing. His hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold the hymnal; he felt that Snuffer Jennings, who was next him, must know what was the matter with him. But Snuffer was singing lustily. George could not join in the hymn, for there was a lump in his throat; but the words flung out by that chorus of clear voices had gripped his very soul. Every stanza, every verse, seemed to voice his own experience and his own need.

At last the hymn was over and they all knelt again for a moment in silent prayer. Then there was a rustle, and the hundred and fifty boys began to pour out of the Chapel into the windy January night. Erroll was sitting at the end of a pew well toward the chancel, and as the others went out he did not follow. He had slipped to his knees again almost out of sight. No one noticed that he remained behind.

At last the boys were all gone, the Doctor had disappeared through the sacristy door. A server entered, extinguished the candles on the altar; then he, too, went away, and George was alone in the

silent Chapel. In a moment he realized that it was not quite dark. The deep red flame of a sanctuary lamp glowed before the altar, and the moonlight shone faintly through the stained glass windows.

The exit of the fellows, the extinguishing of the lights, the intense stillness following, had, at first, roused him to the point of going also, but some inarticulate motive held him there. He knelt on, repeating to himself the burning words of the hymn.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am; Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come."

He had sung those words hundreds of times before and had never realized that they had meaning; to-night they seared into his soul. He did not know that he was praying; he did not know that he was sobbing. Intense, strange, conflicting emotions were sweeping over him as waves over a partly submerged rock at sea—shame and repentance, hope and despair, fear and love. "I believe, I believe," he was murmuring, as he pressed his hot throbbing brow against the back of the pew in front of him. At last he raised his eyes. The deep red drop of flame glowed above the sanctuary. A shaft of moonlight, shining through the pale glass that depicted

the face of Christ in the chancel window, fell upon the brazen cross on the altar. Thrilled with a passionate exaltation, he lifted his arms and stretched forth his hands. "O Lamb of God," he cried in a hoarse broken whisper, "I come, I come . . ."

He did not know how long he remained kneeling in the deserted Chapel. At last he slipped out into the cold clear night. The moon was shining in a deep blue sky, the brighter stars were like little wells of light. A sharp breeze, sweeping across the playing fields, stung his hands and face.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he ran rapidly across the campus, down the hill, and around the cliff path toward Whetstone. He was agitated, but strangely exalted. He did not know what had happened to him. Gradually he stopped running, and at last stood quite still near the Whetstone rock and watched the seas dash against it. He stood there for a long time, rapt in a sort of wonder. Then, at last, he felt cold and turned back toward the school.

He found Pembroke working in their room. His friend looked up as he entered, quickly conscious that something a little unusual had happened.

"Hello," he exclaimed, "where have you been? I was looking all over for you after chapel."

"I went for a walk," George replied, going over and standing by the window, from which there was a great sweeping view of fields and sea bright in the moonlight.

"With whom, Macgregor?"

"No; alone."

"Queer time for a walk."

"I wanted to get off by myself. I wanted a chance to think things out. A lot has been bothering me lately."

"What's the trouble?" asked Pem, closing his book and turning about to face his roommate.

For the moment Erroll did not reply, but stood quite still and silent, looking out upon the sea. When at last he turned to Pem, it was to ask an unexpected question. "Do you believe in conversion?"

"What do you mean?"

"Conversion—don't you know—to religion and that sort of thing?"

"I don't know; I suppose so. I've never thought much about it."

"You have been confirmed; you believe in religion, don't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Didn't you ever have an experience when everything seemed suddenly plain and clear, whereas before all was dim and confused?"

"No; don't think I ever have."

"I think I did to-night. That service in the Chapel—the hymns—something the Doctor said—it got me. It was a bit like what I've heard described as conversion. I stayed on in Chapel after the rest of you had gone, and it was then I began to see things so clearly. Afterward, as I said, I went off for a walk, down on the rocks by Whetstone."

"What do you mean by seeing things clear?"

"It's hard to explain, but it's something like this: —no! I'll have to explain it in my own way. You see, ever since I have been here at school, things have been more or less wrong with me. First, I couldn't get on with the fellows; just hung about, but in reality kept to myself, knowing no one. Why, you scarcely knew I existed, and yet from the beginning I'd wanted you for a pal. Well,—then came that time I stole the exam from Gumshoe's desk. I went to Deering about it, as you may remember I told you, and he made me own up to Roylston. That sort of brought me to my senses: I was darn sure nothing like that would ever happen again. Then Mac took me up—along in Fourth Form year, it was; I got in with you fellows gradually, and I felt everything was all right, that I was skimming along on the top of the wave. But it wasn't all right. Nothing particular happened, but I was going on just as I had done as a kid, sliding out of disagreeable things, taking the easiest way, using cribs for my translations,—and, though I finally gave them up, still deceiving myself, for I let Mac do most of my work for me. It is this way—when I want something, I don't seem able to care what means I use to get it. Just wanting strongly enough has seemed to justify whatever I did. Then, do you remember, last term you told me you thought Meath's influence over me had always been bad?"

"Yes, I remember," Pembroke answered; "I think it has."

"I resented that at the time, but I understand now what you meant. It isn't that Mac has intentionally influenced me to do wrong, though I realize that he hasn't much school spirit or particularly high principles. But the trouble is, there's a side of me that just naturally falls in with that sort of thing. *I* haven't had any real school spirit—I have been working here just for myself."

"Pshaw! old chap, you're morbid."

"No, I'm not. Let me go on; I want to talk it out, now that I've got started. It isn't my imagination: it is just what you felt about me yourself and called 'Mac's influence.' But, you see, I felt bound to be loyal to Macgregor, whether he's a decent sort or not. When he suggested going to New York, I was only too ready to fall in with him. Nine-tenths of me would a thousand times rather have gone to Washington with you, but the other tenth wanted New York, to have exactly the sort of foolish good time we did have. I couldn't afford it, but I would not acknowledge that even to myself. It was a darn fool stunt; no possible excuse. And when the time came to pay the bills I was fifty or sixty dollars shy and Mac couldn't lend me the money."

"What bills?" asked Pem.

"Hotel bills chiefly."

"I see. Why didn't you apply to your father?"

"Pride kept me from that. I began to realize that I had not been fair to him. Laura rubbed that in by refusing to see me unless I went to his house. I'll acknowledge that I am wrong some day, but I

couldn't turn to him just because I had got myself into a tight hole and wanted to be pulled out."

"Yes, but what did you do?"

"Suddenly I saw a way: it wasn't an honorable way, but it was a way."

"You mean Mac saw it?"

"I mean just what I say. Let's leave Mac out. I had collected nearly a hundred dollars for the Lit and had it with me in cash. I just took it—borrowed it, I called it. It seemed easy, and Mac promised to lend me the money to pay it back as soon as we returned to school. Well, he hasn't been able to do so yet. And to cover the fact that I borrowed money that I had no right to, I've lied to Barton—pretended I couldn't collect. Oh! I've been sorry enough for it. But there I am—in a mess!"

"I see, I see," Pembroke murmured.

"You see, too, don't you, that it is not my imagination that has been at work? It goes deep, Ned: it's just me. It makes me sort of afraid of myself. To-night, as we sat in Chapel, it all swept over me. I can't describe the sensations I had: I felt for a while that I was losing my senses. And so I stayed on after you fellows had gone out; and it was then that I began to see things clearly—see myself as I really am. It has all been my own fault—no hard luck—sheer darn foolishness—sheer sin, I guess you'd call it."

Pembroke scarcely knew what to say. "You have to do something about that Lit money right away,"

he said at length. "I wish I had the money to lend you."

"It isn't that. Somehow that doesn't seem to matter as it did. I'm willing now that the worst should come—that I should have to get out of here. Perhaps it will be better in the end if the crash comes now. That's the way it affected me to-night. I seemed to realize that in the future whatever happens I've got to stand the consequences, face the music. I don't so much want to avoid exposure now as I want to get into a position where I can begin over and go straight."

At last Erroll ceased talking and waited for Pembroke's comments. For once it was not Pem's opinion of him that most counted.

"I think I see pretty clearly also," Ned said after a little pause. "I won't pretend, George, that I don't think you ought to blame yourself as you do. But the essential thing is that you realize that it has been your own fault. If you tried to defend taking the Lit money, for instance, I don't think you would deserve to be helped out of the mess. But, as long as you are willing to face the consequences, I don't see for my part what is going to be gained by having this known. We can't deny that it would about ruin your position in the school. If you can pay the Lit back no harm is done. At least, you've injured no one except yourself. It seems to me that somehow or other you have got to raise that money."

"But I can't raise the money, unless Meath lends it to me the first of the month."

"No, no," protested Pembroke quickly; "leave Meath out of it; he's been mixed up with your affairs too much as it is."

"Guess I'll have to, for I've been getting suspicious lately that Mac doesn't mean to get the money. For some reason or other he seems quite willing to leave me in a hole."

"I don't pretend to fathom Meath's motives or intentions. But, whether he will lend you the money or not, I hope you won't take it. There's your father still!"

"But, Pem, I can't—I can't go to my father for the first time with a request like this. I'd rather take the worst that's coming."

"Well, I don't know—perhaps you're right now; but you've been mightily mistaken, old chap, in the attitude that you have been taking to your father all along. I only wish it were possible for me to let you have the money, but you know how small an allowance I get, and that my family simply can't afford to give me more. I want you to go to Mr. Deering; tell him the whole business and take his advice."

"Deering! Oh, I can't go to Deering again with a story of this sort. I can't stand his thinking me—knowing just what I am."

"He'll look at it in the right way," insisted Pembroke. "That's the best thing, George. See him at once. You'll be glad you've done so afterward,

for he will know what is best for you to do. And something, old chap, you've got to do. Come, go right over now before it's too late. We'll talk it over when you get back, for there's something else I want to say to you in this connection."

"Perhaps you're right," said Erroll after a moment's thought.

When George had left to go to the master's room, Pem sat for a long time thinking deeply of his friend's situation. He saw with singular lucidity both Erroll's virtues and his weaknesses: his warm generous devoted nature, his intellectual fineness and distinction, his moral cowardice in the face of temptation to which his love of the easy way betrayed him. He realized that the emotional crisis, precipitated by the Doctor's talk in the Chapel, might well prove a spiritual crisis from which his friend would emerge stronger than he had ever been before, with a grip on himself such as he had not yet had. Pembroke felt also that an essential factor in the bringing about of this result must be the elimination of the influence of Macgregor Meath. He had not found it easy two years before to emancipate himself from Macgregor's domination, but he had never regretted that he had done so.

He looked up as Erroll returned half an hour later.

"You've had a talk with Deering?"

"Yes," George answered. "We had a long talk. I told him everything. Pem, he's a wonder—he's as good a friend as a fellow could have."

"I believe that. But tell me about it."

"In the first place, he didn't act as though I had slain his grandmother. I guess he thinks I'm a poor weak mutt, but he gives me credit for realizing that myself. He seemed to think, despite everything, the whole sickening story of my folly, that I've got it in me to brace up and prove myself a gentleman. He's going to lend me the money to settle up with the Lit."

"Good for him! I was sure he would when I advised you to go to him."

"But he made two conditions: both of them hard enough, as far as that goes, but both of them right, I guess."

"What are they?"

"To begin with, he insisted that I should work next summer and pay him back myself, whether my mother sends me money or not; and he agrees with me that I ought not to ask my father for money to get out of this mess. I think I should have had sense enough to have wanted to earn the money to pay him back even if he hadn't made it a condition. In the second place,—and I'll admit this goes against the grain—he insists that I tell Jack Barton just what happened."

"Tell Barton? I don't see what—why?"

"He thinks I ought to take the consequences that I told a lie to avoid."

"But suppose Barton doesn't think it ought to be kept quiet; suppose he isn't willing to let that end the matter?"

"Deering thinks he will be. But I've got to risk that. It's the Roylston situation over again, Pem. If I hadn't owned up to the Gumshoe that time, I don't believe I'd have ever got back my self-respect. It's that way now. I lied to Barton, and even if I do make good to the Lit—as I can, thank God!—that doesn't wipe out the lie, you see. That's the way Deering feels about it. That is the condition he made in lending me the money; and I must say I see it as he does."

"Perhaps he's right. I daresay he is, though I should hardly have urged you to do that myself. But Deering's got a level head and he's the squarest man I ever knew. By the way, did you say anything to him about Meath?"

"Practically nothing; in fact I made a point of keeping Mac out of it as much as possible. It's my funeral after all—and I guess I ought to have the privilege of choosing my own pall-bearers."

Pembroke smiled. "Perhaps you ought; but I wish you had said something about Mac to Deering. I should like to know if Deering doesn't feel about Meath pretty much as I do."

"I don't know about that. I don't particularly know how you feel. Deering asked no questions, anyway. As far as this business is concerned, Meath is out of it now and I've no disposition to bring him back."

"Won't you tell him that you have settled with the Lit?"

"Not at present—not till I see whether he was

really willing to help me out of the scrape. If that's the case, as I've begun to suspect, I confess I won't have very much more use for Mac. If it isn't, naturally I shall tell him everything; eventually, I suppose, I shall tell him, anyway."

"George," said Pem with unusual earnestness, "I want you to drop Meath. You've paid the debt of gratitude you owe him; let it go at that. His friendship is more dangerous than his enmity. I think you know by this time that I don't say this because I'm jealous."

"I never thought that, Pem," Erroll interrupted. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "hasn't it ever occurred to you that I think more of your little finger than I do of Mac's whole body?"

"Well," rejoined Pem with a smile, "Mac's just the size of my little finger—physically and morally, anyway. Yet there were times, old boy, when I wondered a bit, I'll acknowledge. But, George, he's false; he has a rotten poor spirit; I hate to say it, but fundamentally, he's a mucker. Drop him. You'll never regret it. And be straightforward about it. Tell him why."

"Suppose I should drop him—just suppose—what could I say to him—what reasons could I give?"

"That you've made up your mind to stand for the sort of thing he doesn't know the meaning of,—the sort of thing you can't stand for and be good friends with him."

"Suppose I do want to pull off from him—and I'll

admit that I do to some extent, anyway—Mac's impervious to hints."

"Don't hint; kick him out."

"Maybe you're right, Pem," Erroll admitted. "At any rate, I will knock off being so intimate with him. But as for openly breaking with him—honestly, I don't know—that'll have to depend on circumstances. I'm to see Barton to-morrow morning. Deering is to let me have a check first thing, and I'll skip in town between recitations and deposit it in the bank. I'll resign the managership."

"Don't do anything of the kind," protested Pembroke. "Offer to do so, but let Barton decide about that."

"But, even if he were willing to keep me, think how I should feel. I would always imagine that he was suspecting me of being crooked."

"I don't believe he would. But, old boy, that's just another consequence that you've got to face."

Erroll smiled ruefully. "I'm a great hand for sniffing out consequences, and dodging 'em, eh? Say—next time you see me in that attitude, just give a good swift kick, will you?"

"I'll be delighted."

They began then to get ready for bed. Before going into his own room, Erroll turned for a moment and faced Pembroke with a little air of determination that caused his friend to regard him with fresh astonishment. "Pem," he said, growing very red as he spoke, "I can't tell you what it means to me that through all this you stick by me."

Pembroke laughed to cover his embarrassment, but he took the assurance in the spirit it was given. "Don't try then, old man," he replied. "Don't you worry about that: I could stick to you through a darn sight more. Good-night."

That night Erroll knelt down and said his prayers, something that he had not done for years. They were the prayers he had learned in childhood from an old nurse, a good creature long since gone to her reward. They were not particularly appropriate to his condition, but, beneath the childish formulæ, doubtless the good God knew the repentance and the stammering faith to which he was giving such expression as he could.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BREAK

THE next morning Mr. Deering handed Erroll a check for sixty dollars. The boy gave a great sigh of relief, blurted out his gratitude, and went off, post haste, to deposit it to the credit of the *Lit.* at the bank in Monday Port. He got back to school before the last morning recitation and made an appointment to see Barton directly after dinner.

As soon as they were alone together in the Head Prefect's room Erroll made his confession. "I have no excuse to offer," he said in conclusion; "I thought I could repay the money as soon as I got back, but I was disappointed. I got scared, and, not knowing what under heaven I could do, I simply lied to you to gain time when I told you I hadn't been able to collect. I have squared up with the Lit, but I owe it to you to tell you that I lied when you asked me if I had collected those New York bills. I've no possible defense or excuse. And now all I can do is to ask you to get some one else to manage the Lit for the rest of the year. Of course, I would rather you kept this to yourself, but I ask no favors."

Barton was a mature youth and a wise one, char-

acteristics that had led to his appointment as Head Prefect.

"I am glad you told me, Erroll," he said at last. "Of course, I shall not say anything about it as long as the matter is settled. On the other hand, I don't see any advantage in your giving up the managership. That would only lead to comment, and do no good to anyone."

"But—but—you—you—you can't trust me," George blurted out.

"Of course we can trust you. Don't say anything more about it," said Barton. "We must get together, all of us, and talk over this anniversary number. I wish you would see the printer as soon as you can and get estimates on the cost. Drop around to-night, can you, at nine-thirty? I'll speak to the rest of the board."

The attitude of the editor-in-chief toward his shortcomings relieved Erroll of a great load of anxiety. He felt that he had been treated with infinitely more consideration than he deserved, and he was correspondingly grateful.

With his financial difficulties straightened out for the time being, he began to think of Pembroke's advice about ending his intimacy with Meath. And he was the more impelled to follow it as he felt that Meath, for some reason, had been more than willing to leave him in the hole into which he had got by acting on Macgregor's advice. But he could not think how he would put the matter to Meath. He had seen little of him since their return from New

York, and for the time he decided simply not to seek him,—in fact, rather pointedly to avoid him.

On his part, Macgregor had been annoyed upon their first getting back by George's persistent appeals about the promised loan, and, in consequence, he had stayed away from the Old School in the evenings. The check from his father arrived and his first impulse had been to go at once to Erroll and give him the money he so sorely needed; then, recollecting that Erroll had ceased to ask for it and had not been near him for almost a week, he decided to wait until he was appealed to again. Furthermore, he was busy cultivating Grafton and Teal once more; and, as he somewhat brutally put it to himself, he felt that Erroll would keep.

They met one afternoon on the way to Beaver Pond for hockey practice. Meath and Teal were walking arm-in-arm, and Erroll ran into them just as he emerged from a door in the rear of the Old School. Meath had long since retired from the captaincy of his form team and was content to play in scrub games. Erroll, on the other hand, was now a substitute on the school team.

As George was alone, it was impossible not to join the other two on the way to the Pond, but he greeted them with some embarrassment and momentary hesitation, and did not fall in until Meath extended an imperious invitation.

"Where have you been keeping yourself?" Macgregor asked suddenly, after they had walked along a moment or so in silence.

"I?—no place, particularly—hockey, poling, same old things."

"Sorry not to have been around nights; I've been exceptionally busy getting up a debate for the Civics with Graf."

Erroll made no reply, and again they walked on silently. Teal at last relieved the tension by asking the subject of the debate.

"Ass-ears!" exclaimed Meath irritably; "we've been talking of the thing in your room every night for a week. What's the matter with you?"

Polly, properly rebuked, held his peace.

"By the by, George," said Macgregor presently, "come to the pie-house with me after practice."

"Can't," Erroll replied; "I asked Snuffer to go with me."

"Oh! you've taken up with Snuffer, have you? What's the point?'

"No point. I've always seen more or less of Snuffer."

"Really? But I thought you never did anything without a point?"

"You've confused me with yourself, Mac."

"Perhaps I have, perhaps I have. Come with me to-morrow afternoon then."

"Sorry, I'm——"

"Going with Snuffer again?"

"No—with Pem."

"When will you come? Next day—Saturday?"

"That's too far ahead," said George, "I never make plans more than two days in advance." He

knew that he had grown red to a degree that could scarcely be attributed to the cold. He could feel Meath's bright little eyes fastened upon his face, but he would not look up.

For the moment Macgregor made no reply. At last he turned and addressed Teal with scarcely concealed sarcasm. "I hope your multifarious engagements won't keep *you* from coming with me, Poll?"

"Sure they won't," answered Polly; "didn't we make a date to go?"

"So we did, so we did," said Macgregor. And they walked on in silence.

Arrived at the Pond, they put on their skates, and all three skated off in different directions: Erroll to the school rink, Meath to the Sixth Form hockey reserve, and Teal out upon the Pond dotted with scores of boys darting hither and thither. It was a bright still clear day—a wonderful day for skating.

It was also a half-holiday, the latter part of which was devoted by immemorial custom to the patronage of the pie-house on the Old Beach Road. About half-past four the hockey practice was called off, Erroll joined the patient Jennings, and they tramped over the frozen fields to the Wadmer farmhouse.

Two long deal tables lined either side of the great old-fashioned kitchen of the pie-house, around which were sitting a score or more of boys. They were all upper school fellows, for "the kids" were relegated to an outer and less attractive kitchen in the

rear. Mrs. Wadmer, in a polka dot calico, presided at an enormous stove in the chimney, dexterously preparing a dozen orders at the same time—nicely done sausages, eggs in a variety of styles,—the "bird's nest" predominating,—and cornmeal griddle cakes of a special sort sacred to Cæsarea. A fat little Portuguese maid waddled about, taking orders from the boys and handing dishes from the stove to the tables.

Erroll and Jennings found seats among the Sixth Formers, gave their orders directly to Mrs. Wadmer over Manuella's head, and as they waited fell to talking with their neighbors. Snuffer soon went to the pantry and helped himself to a large jar of peanut butter and a box of sweet biscuit, which he brought back to share with George. This was the customary pie-house *hors-d'œuvre*. Undeterred by the various conversations going on about them, Snuffer engaged Erroll in a discussion of the comparative merits of the Parliamentary and Congressional systems of government, defending the English method, which Erroll, knowing all about at first hand, had professed to regard as much inferior. At length Manuella presented them with a plate of eggs and sausages and a platter of hot griddle cakes, and the argument was speedily forgotten in the discussion of more concrete matter.

Suddenly there was a commotion. The outer door was burst open, and Polly Teal, covered with snow, was precipitated into the midst of the kitchen as though he had been hurled from a catapult. Mac-

gregor Meath, who had been pelting him with snowballs all the way from the Pond, followed close upon his heels. Teal, in his excitement, crashed pell-mell into the nearest table, sent a dozen boys half-over backward, and quite upset poor Snuffer and his food on top of him. For a few moments general rough-house threatened the kitchen with destruction. At last Meath, crying out profuse apologies the while, extricated Polly from beneath the pile of boys who had jumped upon him, and sat him down at a vacant seat at the table. Order was gradually restored, and every one got back to their places and collected their scattered delicacies,—all except Snuffer Jennings, who was discovered standing sadly by the sink, striving to remove from his shirt-front the traces of a soft poached egg.

Meath gave his orders to Mrs. Wadmer, then turned about to help Polly, who was enduring a united verbal attack from the company. Teal could not reply to the ragging, for he had begun to laugh hysterically, and then to cough in absurd fashion, his entire body visibly assisting at the frequent spasms.

"Stop it!" roared a dozen boys.

"I can't!" he bellowed, and sputtered again.

"Stop him! He'll choke!"

"Give him water!"

"Beat his back!"

"Stand him on his head!"

A score of hands reached forward to execute these suggestions, which, undoubtedly, would have been

put into effect but for Meath's good-natured protection of the gurgling Polly. Teal continued to cough violently at intervals till he was purple in the face and the veins stood out in his forehead.

"Gag him if he won't stop!" cried Tom Watson.

"Choke him! choke him!" pleaded Douglas Ware.

"Give us a chance at him, Mac!"

"No, no! Let him alone!" thundered Meath. "It wasn't his fault. The poor devil has got the worst of it anyway."

"Has he?" inquired Snuffer pathetically from the sink; "seems to me I have."

"Right O!"

"Will you look at Snuffs!"

"You suggest a decayed barnstormer, Jennings."

"Make him clean you off, Snuff."

"Give him your shirt, Poll; you've ruined his. Don't be a tightwad now."

At last they wearied of the horsing and the noise simmered down to the usual buzz of desultory talk. Mrs. Wadmer, whose tender heart had bled for Polly during the scene, for she always imagined him brutally abused, brought him a platter of glowing pancakes with her own hands. The cough miraculously vanished and Polly fell to.

By and by the fellows began to leave in groups of twos and threes. Erroll and Jennings were delayed, as a fresh supply of sausages and eggs had to be cooked for Snuffer, so that Meath and Teal had finished before them and were ready to go.

"How much?" Macgregor demanded of Mrs. Wadmer.

The hostess reckoned what he and Teal had eaten, including the cake, pies, chocolate, peanut butter, biscuits and chewing-gum, that Polly was stowing away in his pockets and beneath his sweater.

"Four dollars and fifteen cents."

"Go along!" exclaimed Meath. "You're jollying us, Mrs. Wadmer. Why, I could live at the best hotel in New York for a week at that rate, couldn't I, Erroll?"

"No, really, Mr. Meath," protested Mrs. Wadmer. "It comes to that, and more, I guess. See what Mr. Polly is sticking into his pockets."

"Oh, I forgot I was paying for Teal. I guess you're right. You're losing nothing, anyway; I needn't worry about that." He took out his wallet and displayed a roll of bills. "Confound it! I haven't anything smaller than a twenty-dollar bill. You can't change it?"

"Oh! yes, I can," cried the hostess, diving into her capacious pocket.

"I'll bet you can. You're rolling in money, Mrs. W., rolling. You'll retire some day and build a marble palace in Monday Port—that's you! And all off the profits of us poor little boys."

"Go along with you, Mr. Meath," exclaimed Mrs. Wadmer; "I don't like your silly jokes. I don't make enough off you boys to pay me for the trouble of cooking for you."

She took the twenty-dollar bill and counted out

the change. Meath watched her carefully, incidentally flashing a glance or so at Erroll. Then he called Teal to come on, and they went out together.

George had pretended not to notice the transaction, but not a word or movement of Meath's had escaped him. He has received his check, he thought. Then presently, when Snuffer had finished, they also paid their bills and started for the school.

Two days passed and Macgregor made no further advances. But on Saturday, encountering George near the post-office in the Old School, he repeated his invitation to the pie-house. Again George declined on the plea that he was walking with Snuffer.

"Hard to compete against the Snuffer," said Meath. "By the by," he added, "I've had my check."

"Have you?"

"You were anxious enough about it a week ago. No interest?"

"None," answered Erroll laconically.

"Humph!" said Meath with a sneer. "I'll be hanged if I'll lend you a cent, if you are going to be so blamed snippy."

Erroll turned sharply on his heel and walked away. Macgregor stood looking after him for a moment, an unpleasant expression darkening his face. Suddenly he called after him.

"Wait a second, Erroll; I want to speak to you."

George turned about, without advancing. "What is it?" he asked.

"Why can't you go with me to the pie-house this afternoon?"

"I told you, because I am going to walk with Jennings."

"Ah! this sudden devotion to Snuffer; it's touching, really."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"No, it isn't by a long shot," Meath replied, walking up close to Erroll.

"What is it? I'm in a hurry. I have a recitation next period."

"You've got ten minutes before that," said Meath with an ill-concealed sneer, "so there's no occasion for getting into a stew. I want particularly to see you this afternoon. Put Snuffer off."

"I can't do that."

"I make a point of it. Jennings will be flattered if you ask him a favor."

"But I don't want to put him off," Erroll replied. "I asked him to walk because I wanted him to go."

"I tell you I make a point of it," repeated Meath, his voice rising with annoyance. "You can easily put Snuffer off till some other afternoon, and you know it."

"I'm sorry; I can't do it."

"You mean you refuse to do it." Meath's tones now were those of an indignant challenge.

"Yes, if you insist; I refuse to do it. If you want, I will see you some other time."

"But I don't want; this afternoon suits me."

"It doesn't suit me." Again George made as if to go.

"I advise you to make it suit you," exclaimed Meath. "What the dickens is the matter with you? I ask a particular favor, and I may say I expect you to grant it without all this fuss."

"And I have told you half-a-dozen times that I can't."

"Won't."

"Have your way—won't."

By this time Macgregor had worked himself into a state of intense irritation. Tact was thrown to the winds.

"I can't force you to go. But I tell you what, Erroll—if you don't go, you will regret it."

At this George, who had up till now kept his temper, flushed with anger. "Are you making a threat?"

"I mean you to go, I say. And, if you won't go, make up your mind to take the consequences."

"I'll take the consequences, Meath," said Erroll tensely. "If you think you can browbeat me into doing your bidding, you're mistaken. What's more: I'm through with you for good and all. If you want to know what has led up to this, you know where to find me."

With this he stalked off at last, and paid no heed to Meath's one or two attempts to call him back again. He was somewhat agitated by the quarrel, but he went off at once to his recitation and succeeded in pulling himself together.

Later in the day he told Pembroke what had happened. "This, I suppose," he concluded, "ends things between us."

"It doesn't, by any means," protested Pem. "You must see him and have it out. Break fair. As you've left it now, he probably thinks you are simply sore because he hasn't lent you the money he promised. You must get that idea out of his head. See him to-night and end it definitely."

"All right," said George wearily. Nothing he had ever determined to do seemed to him more distasteful.

His relations with Meath preoccupied him all the afternoon, but he could not succeed in formulating clearly what he should say to Meath when he went to him. He realized that the break had come and that it would not be fair to either of them if the real cause of the rupture were not clearly understood. And yet, since it was the result of a newly recognized principle of conduct rather than resentment at any recent occurrence, he could not see how he was to put it to Macgregor. Nevertheless, he decided that he would go to see him that evening.

After supper George strolled into the Sixth Form common room, intending to read the papers until such time as he fancied he might find Meath in his study. There were half-a-dozen fellows, Macgregor among them, standing before the fireplace. As Erroll entered, the conversation suddenly ceased. He nodded to the crowd, took a newspaper from the rack, and seating himself at a table tried to read.

"As Erroll entered, the conversation suddenly ceased"

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

But he could not keep his attention from the group nearby. He was conscious that the conversation which had been interrupted by his entrance had not been resumed, for it was with ill-concealed effort and slight success that several fellows made random remarks—as he imagined, for his benefit. In a few moments the group separated, one or two took up magazines or newspapers, the others left the room.

George rose just as Meath was leaving. "Oh, Mac," he called; "I want to see you if you are not busy."

Mac turned and paused irresolute, eyeing Erroll with surprise. "I wasn't going to my room," he answered with studied coolness, "but I can give you a few minutes, if it is important."

Erroll was about to give a sharp reply, but checked himself. "It is important," he said. "I'll come along now."

"O very well," was Meath's reply. "Excuse me, fellows," he added to the two who had stood waiting for him as he spoke with Erroll, "I'll join you before long in Dick's room."

He and Erroll walked in silence down the hallway and across the quad to Meath's study in Standerland. There they found Polly Teal esconced on a window-seat reading a novel.

"Hello, Mac; I've been waiting—oh, howdy, Erroll."

"How are you, Polly?"

"I'm sorry, Poll, old girl," exclaimed Macgregor,

"but do you mind cutting out for a while? Erroll and I want to have a bit of private jaw. Go to Dick's room—the fellows are there, and I'll be down in ten minutes or so. Will that suit you?" he asked George.

"I don't know," Erroll answered.

"Before long anyway. Cut along, Poll."

"All right," said Teal; "I'll wait for you; but make it short."

"Sure thing. Now get!"

When Polly had left, Macgregor switched on the main light, and sat down on a chair before his desk.

"Have a seat," he said to Erroll.

"Thanks, I'll stand," George replied, taking a position before the empty fireplace and resting one arm upon the mantel.

For a moment there was an awkward silence, during which Meath did not remove his curious bright light blue eyes from Erroll's dark troubled face.

"Well," he said at length; "I suppose you didn't come merely to give me the pleasure of looking at you. What is it you want to see me about?"

Upon this George looked at him directly. Their eyes met, and in the expression of both there was manifest scarcely controlled irritation, the latent dislike that was threatening at any moment to boil over into overt word or act. This time Erroll's gaze did not shrink under Meath's insulting stare, and Macgregor was the first to shift his eyes.

"I think we shall get on better," Erroll remarked

quietly, "if you will spare me unnecessary sarcasm."

"Very well; fire ahead! What the devil is it you want?"

"You remember our conversation at the post-office this morning?"

"Perfectly," replied Meath; "I could repeat it word for word."

"You made a point, you recollect, that I should break a previous engagement and go with you to the pie-house?"

"I did."

"And you threatened me with certain consequences if I refused?"

"I meant to convey that impression."

"I did refuse, and I did not go."

"Exactly—credit me with sufficient intelligence to have made that observation."

"I suppose you are also sufficiently intelligent to realize that by not going I meant to break with you pretty definitely?"

"Your confidence in my intelligence is not misplaced. I gathered just that. But, see here," he added, "if this is all you have to say to me, you might have spared me the trouble—to say nothing of yourself—of coming here to repeat it to-night."

"It is not all I have to say," replied Erroll quietly. "I want you to know exactly what has brought me to the point of breaking friendship with you. It would not be fair——"

"Please, please," interrupted Meath, "methinks

you protest too much. 'Fairness' is not a quality that one readily associates with your character, Erroll."

"Precisely not," replied George dryly. "You have hit, Macgregor, on what is at the bottom of it all. I am sick—sick of being unfair, of being unfair to myself, to you, to the school."

"Ah! this sounds like a Sunday night testimony at a form prayer meeting, which, however, I have not observed that you have heretofore often patronized. Been converted to appreciate how bully they are for the spirit of the school and all that?"

"My opinion of prayer meetings is what it always was," Erroll answered; "but nevertheless, I think I have been converted."

"Pembroke's brotherly influence and example, perhaps?"

"Perhaps. But to go back. I want to try to explain to you, if you will listen, why my attitude toward you has changed."

"Fire away. I'm all a-glow with interest."

"In the first place, Mac, I want to say that whatever has happened since, whatever may happen,—I have always been grateful to you, I always will be grateful, for what you did for me when I was a poor shadowy sort of creature in the school."

"Yes—I guess I made you. But we'll let that pass."

"No, we won't let it pass. You did make me in more ways than one. You made me come out of my shell for one thing, and that's what I'm grateful

for. You found me a cowardly weak kid—mere putty ready to be molded by the first person who took the trouble to do it; and it's true—you have helped make me—shifty, unfair, double-faced, a liar more than once, and darned near a thief. I have been all that, Mac; and so have you. It hasn't been good for us to be friends; it was just the weak rotten elements in our characters that brought us together and kept us intimate."

Meath was still keeping his temper, but his pale blue eyes were glinting unpleasantly behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. "Do you think for an instant, Erroll," he interrupted to ask sneeringly, "that you have ever had the slightest influence over me?"

"Yes, I do," George replied patiently. "Everybody has influence over every person with whom he comes into contact. But I'll not pretend it is chiefly you that I am thinking about; it's myself——"

"No doubt!" exclaimed Meath. "That pretense would be the shallowest sort of affectation. Thinking of anybody but yourself is so exceedingly rare an experience for you, Erroll, that I have not ventured to flatter myself that in all this you have been thinking of me at all, at all."

"You misunderstand me," said George quietly; "but I can't help that. As I look back on our two years of intimacy, Macgregor, it seems to me that it has been rotten for me and probably bad for you. Perhaps you will let me tell you why I think so?"

"Since to tell is so obviously your point in com-

ing at all, I won't deprive you of the pleasure by refusing to listen. Besides you interest me, though not quite in the way you imagine. I shall have something to say myself by and by when you are quite finished. Pray continue."

"As I look back," George repeated, "it seems to me that everything that I have done in this school which I ought not to have done has taken place in your company, has been in a way due to your influence."

"Really! With what extraordinary influence you credit me; what weakness you modestly assume for yourself!"

"I've been weak," said George bitterly; "I know it only too well. But I could take instance after instance, and see that what I did was largely because I was with you. When I have stuck to Pembroke, it has all been different. I did my work honestly when I have been with him. Half the time these last two years it has been your work I've handed in. You've done my problems, you've got out the Latin——"

"I—or a trot," said Meath.

"Yes, you or a trot. When you failed me, I had got so used to dishonest work that I fell back on the next easiest thing. Besides, I have spent several vacations with you. You know the sort of things we have done then. They may be all right for you, but they're rotten for me. Then to cap the climax—this last vacation in New York. If it hadn't been for you, I shouldn't have gone; if it hadn't

been for you, I wouldn't have spent so much money,—money that I told you I couldn't afford to spend; what's more,—if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have taken money that didn't belong to me to pay those rotten bills with."

"Ah!" exclaimed Macgregor, "I thought we should reach the point at last."

"No, this isn't specially the point—it's simply the culmination—what finally opened my eyes."

"Well—go on."

"Having taken the Lit money, you promised me faithfully that you would lend me enough to pay it back soon after we returned to school?"

"Yes," said Meath; "I promised that, and I meant to keep my promise."

"But you didn't keep it!"

"No; as a matter of fact I didn't get the money when I thought I should."

"You got it, however. I saw you flourish a roll of bills at the pie-house last Wednesday for my benefit, and proclaim that you hadn't a cent under a twenty."

"So I did, though not especially for your benefit; but I had just received my check."

"That may be. Why didn't you offer, then, to lend me the money? You had promised to; you knew I was in the deuce of a hole, and partly, at least, through your fault—through depending upon you, anyway."

"I don't accept your statement about it's being my fault that you took the Lit money. But I did

promise to lend you enough to cover that, and I had no intention then and have no intention now of breaking my promise. But you suddenly got so darned snippy that I thought I'd wait until you asked for it again."

"Pembroke wouldn't have waited."

"Perhaps not, but I don't pretend to be a model of all the Christian virtues, as Pembroke does. I am quite ready to lend you fifty or sixty dollars now, even after this tirade." Meath put his hand into his pocket as though to take out his wallet.

"Thanks—I don't need it now. I have settled with the Lit."

"So I supposed from the first, or you wouldn't have come here to-night with this choice line of sanctimonious bull. Have you settled by doctoring the accounts or by lying to Barton?"

"Damn you, neither! I told Barton the truth. I got the money from a friend."

"All right, all right; I agree with you, there's no use in lying except under pressure."

"That's your policy, I know, that's the rotten theory you've always been trying to drive into me."

"And with admirable success, Georgie, if I have tried." Macgregor took off his spectacles, laid them aside, and looked at Erroll with a quizzical leer.

"Yes, with admirable success," rejoined Erroll bitterly. "But I have come to myself. I made up my mind that if necessary I would take the consequences of that business with the Lit, and at the

same time I made up my mind that I would break with you for good and all. But I think of all the mean tricks you ever played, Mac, the one that would have driven me to this if all the rest had not, was that when I began to pull away from you; to show you, at least courteously, that we could not be intimate friends as we have been, you should deliberately threaten to expose me to the school. For that's what you meant when you told me I must take the consequences if I didn't knuckle to your bidding. I know you must have a poor opinion of me, but I couldn't stand association with a fellow who thought so meanly of me as to suppose that I would stand for that. That's all—I want to tell you to your face that we can't go on. At least I have not been double-faced in my dealings with you."

He ceased speaking, bowed his head for a moment, and pressed his fingers against his eyes. He was deeply moved by his long talk. There was a profound silence between them, during which Meath studied his companion intently.

"Erroll," he said at last, "I've listened patiently to what you have had to say, barring occasional inadvertent interruptions. I will neither accept nor deny your flattering interpretation of my personality. Perhaps now, you will be as patient as I have tried to be, while I attempt to sketch the impression of you that has been deepening in my mind of late,—an impression that makes me agree with you profoundly that anything in the nature of friendship

is over between us. You called yourself a little while ago a poor shadowy sort of creature. You were that truly when you first came to school, and you would have been that to the end if it had not been for me. For you are a coward at heart, and it was I who taught you to come out of your shell, assert yourself, try to be something. Yes, you were right, I made you—I, Macgregor Meath."

As he continued to speak Meath was throwing himself into the situation, into the rôle he had assumed, with all the ardor of his vigorous imagination and dramatic sense.

"But do you suppose that I made you without effort, without some sacrifice to myself? I paid for the privilege, and I paid heavily. For four years I was the undisputed leader of my form. No one would deny that. And I liked it; I was proud of it; it was as it should be. You felt that, and that is the reason you were so flattered when I took you up."

"Yes, I was flattered," Erroll interrupted; "but I don't see how it cost you anything except kindness."

"I was about to explain. You were in those days, Erroll, what you have continued to be—well, until a week ago anyway—for I don't profess to probe the depth or forecast the permanence of your change of heart: you were shifty, cowardly, selfish; worse, before I ever knew you and had the slightest chance to exert my rotten influence over you, you were a liar, a cheat, and a thief."

Erroll clenched his fists, the blood fled from his face and left it ashy, and he moved toward Meath menacingly.

But Macgregor met his advance unflinchingly, with a sneer on his lips. "Reduce the argument to the vulgarity of a fight, if you want," he said. "But you had better hear me out: remember you have been saying pretty much the same sort of thing about me,—or implying it, which is less to my taste. I prefer to say just what I mean."

Erroll stopped in the middle of the room. "Prove what you said about my being a thief."

"I was about to do so when you interrupted me. You had cheated in exams from the time you came to school, long before you knew me. You've kept on cheating ever since, as you acknowledged a few minutes ago. What's more, *before* we ever became friends, you stole a Latin exam from old Roylston."

George started with surprise; he tried to speak, but the corners of his mouth seemed to twist and no words came.

"Ah!" said Macgregor "I have you on the hip. Do you deny it?"

"No—I'd forgotten about it."

"You want to know how I discovered it, eh?"

"Yes."

"I always suspected something, always; knew there was something between you and Deering that you didn't want known. That's why, you booby, I first took you up—curiosity, not affection, prompted me. You weren't as fascinating as perhaps you

thought. On the contrary you have always bored me. But to the point—reflect who knew that you had stolen that exam. Roylston knew, of course."

"Yes, and didn't tell. I don't believe he ever told. He promised me he would not."

"No, he didn't; it wasn't Roylston. Fellows are so accustomed to ascribe every rotten thing that happens to poor old Gumshoe, that for one I can't stand having him blamed for something he didn't do, even by you. But there were others who knew."

"Who knew?"

"Well—Deering and Pembroke." It was a guess and a bold one, but Meath knew instantly that it was correct as he saw the confirmatory start that Erroll gave.

"Well—who else knew?" asked George.

"Who else?—who else could know?"

Suddenly Erroll pulled himself together and was standing over Meath, glaring down at him, his eyes flashing and his nostrils quivering. "Meath," he cried in a strange passionate voice that was half a snarl, "Pembroke and Deering are my best friends. Their little fingers are worth yours and my bodies rolled into one. If you so much as hint one vile lying accusation against them, I swear I'll beat you into a pulp. You are right—Deering knew, Pembroke knew—because I told them. Now how do you know? If you accuse them of betraying me, I—I think I'll kill you."

For the first time in their angry dialogue Meath quailed. "Get back there!" he muttered. "I've

said nothing about them. Don't be so blamed keen to jump to conclusions."

"No, but you haven't exonerated them; you've got to do that. How did you find out? You must tell me. I'll force you to tell me. I mean it." He grabbed Macgregor's arm and held it in a vise-like grip.

"Let me go. I intend to tell you. It was this that cost me my friends. It was because you were a thief that I had to pay the price I did in taking you up."

"How did you find out? I want to know, and quickly!"

"Get back, will you? Grafton saw you come out of Roylston's room—he was behind you as you crossed the campus. You dropped the exam you'd stolen, and afterwards came back to pick it up. In the meantime Grafton had found it, guessed what you'd done, and left it lie."

"I remember, I remember," said Erroll. He stepped back to the mantelpiece, all the passion gone from his face and attitude, and again wearily leaned his head upon his hand. "I see," he added, "this accounts for Grafton's attitude toward me always. I understand at last."

"And it accounts also," continued Meath, "for his attitude toward me. I insisted on putting you up for the Kappa Upsilon. He blackballed you. We quarreled over that, and long afterwards I wormed the reason for his attitude toward you out of him. Don't fret, he's never told anyone else."

"I see," George repeated; "go on."

"But why go on?" asked Meath. "That's what you were when I first knew you, before I could possibly have had any influence over you; that's what you've continued to be. But it strikes me as absurd, to say the least, that, since I am not the moral ideal you worship in Pembroke, you make me responsible for your sins. Come, be honest! You throw me over because I've ceased to be useful. I am no longer of service in advancing you socially, 'making' you. No! you are you, and you will be you to the end of the chapter. Instead of being straightforward even about this, you cook up a lot of pious jaw and suppose that I'm fool enough to swallow it. You expect me to say, 'Yes, Georgie, we have been bad for one another, and we mustn't play together any more.' Bah! I'm not so easy, Erroll, not so easy."

For a moment or so George looked at him in bewilderment, but gradually his expression changed to one of deeper and deeper contempt.

"Meath," he said at length, "you are even more despicable than I thought you, than I could have imagined you would be. I am afraid it is hopeless to try to talk with you, to try to get you to see things as I do. I can't deny the acts you accuse me of, and for which you've chosen the hardest names; therefore I can't resent your flinging them in my face. But you can't understand that a fellow may go wrong and then be sorry for it, can you?

You can't believe that a fellow should ever honestly want to start fresh and go straight, can you?"

"O Lord!" exclaimed Meath, "let us join in prayer."

"Don't you see," Erroll went on, unheeding the interruption, "how false a friend you've always been? You've suspected this, known it for I can't tell how long, held it over me, kept it back for just such dirty use as I think you are planning to put it to. It has been flashing across me of late—it's occurred before, but I've put it aside—that you have deliberately led me to do wrong in order to get a hold over me. You think you have me, don't you? Bah! I can't stand you. I thought we'd break, but break decently, with kindly feelings for each other despite all that has been wrong. But now we'll break completely. From to-night I'm done with you —absolutely." He turned on his heel and started for the door.

But Meath was quicker. He sprang forward and stood with his back against the door. "Just a moment. You're not going till I've had my say. We break—that goes without saying; but we break in the manner *I* choose to prescribe. Do you think I'll submit tamely to your pious shamming? Not by a darn sight! The school is to know nothing of this. I don't choose that it shall. It doesn't suit me. We are to continue to appear as if nothing had happened, as we have been. You will come here when I ask you in a crowd, and I will go to your room when I please."

"No, no!" said Erroll hoarsely. "Have you lost your senses? Let me out!" His eyes, in which rage almost beyond control was gleaming again, were wild and bloodshot.

"I'm not out of my senses," cried Meath in a high strained voice that cracked absurdly at almost every phrase. "Do you imagine, you booby, that I'll submit to your cutting me? Try that, my former friend, and the fellows shall know what you are, and judge between us. Nay!—not so fast. You understand me?—we break as I choose."

Erroll was close to him now, their hot excited faces were within a foot of each other. George's hand was out; he was groping as if he were blind for the door.

"I understand you thoroughly," he cried, grasping Meath's shoulder. "Now out of my way, you mucker, or I'll hurt you."

"Not so fast, not so fast!" repeated Meath, wrenching himself free from Erroll's hand.

Suddenly George drew back, raised his arm, and brought down his clenched fist with a smashing blow on Meath's face. The boy uttered a blasphemous oath, but reeled away, and made no effort to return it. Erroll wrenched the door open and stalked out.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FLIGHT

After striking Meath in a paroxysm of blind rage, Erroll's first impulse had been to continue the blows, to spring upon the object of his wrath and do him any injury that lay in his power. But Meath's expression of agonized terror, the sinking of his small distorted face beneath the impact of the blow, his blasphemous exclamation, had suddenly brought him to his senses. As had happened before in moments of intense anger or fear, he felt physically sick. He wanted nothing so much as to get away from the horrible scene he had brought about, to be alone in the open air.

He rushed down the stairs and out upon the campus. The cool night wind restored his bodily equilibrium, but his nerves were throbbing and he was intensely excited. Instead of going directly to his room, he wandered about the cold deserted quadrangle for a while, living over again the experience through which he had passed.

He could recall, it seemed to him, every word of the conversation with Meath. Every taunt, epithet, sarcasm was burned into his memory by rage and shame. He would not have believed that Meath

could anger him so intensely, that it could be possible he would so completely lose control of himself. Meath's knowledge of the long-passed Latin examination incident had taken him off his feet. What avenging fate had brought to light and given to Meath for his undoing his thrice-confessed, thrice-forgiven, almost forgotten sin? He had begun and ended his school career—for he assumed that his school days were over—with an act of dishonor. Aye, as Meath had vulgarly called him, he was a thief! One or the other of these crimes might have been passed over, but who would tolerate him now, knowing that twice at an interval of two years he had stolen for his own selfish purposes? He had deceived himself in supposing that by going to Deering and Barton he had been willing to face the consequences. Was he willing? No! a thousand times, No! Every instinct of self-preservation and vanity cried out that he could not face the exposure to which undoubtedly the maddened Meath would now subject him.

The memory of the night alone in the Chapel a few days before flashed into his mind. All had seemed clear then; he had yielded to the good influences of the time and place—and to what end? Only to be hurled afresh into mortification and despair. And he had supposed—yes, he had dared to suppose that he had been *converted.* He had used that sickening cant word to describe his relief at somehow seeing his way out of difficulties. The idea of prayer, of appeal to a higher power, did not now

enter his head. If he remembered bitterly that he had raised his arms and invoked the Lamb of God, just as surely had God forsaken him now, had left him to wallow in the revolting consequences of his sin. Consequences, the very word which so often he had heard and used of late, enraged him anew.

He could see Meath's thin sneering lips, the leer in his bright little eyes, the freckles on his distended nostrils, the reddish hair all brushed awry. And then again would come the sensation of nausea, as he could see the boy reel under his blow and shrink away in sheer physical fear. There could have been no question of Meath successfully defending himself. Only a coward would have struck him! That is what I have always been, thought George bitterly, a coward!

He wandered about for some time, a prey to such disordered fancies; and turned in at the Old School only when he began to suffer intensely from the cold. He had been walking about in freezing temperature without overcoat or gloves.

He found Pembroke, who surmised where he had been, patiently waiting for him.

"What's the matter?" asked Pem, looking at his roommate anxiously.

George stared at him for a moment as if he did not comprehend what was being said.

"Where have you been? What is the trouble?" Pembroke repeated.

"I have been having it out with Meath," George answered at last, coming to himself with a start.

"We've broken—absolutely,—as you wanted. I hope you will be satisfied."

"Probably I shall. But tell me—you look all in."

"I am all in. I can't go over it again," said Erroll. "It was too disgusting, too abominable. It was the limit, Pem; the worst thing I ever had to go through with. We had a row—a rotten vulgar row—and I struck him."

"Do you mean you had a fight?"

"No—he didn't hit back—and lucky he didn't, I think I should have killed him."

"Why the dickens did you lose your temper and have a quarrel?"

"Why did we quarrel? Good heavens! an angel would have quarreled. But it's all up—we've broken—broken for good. He'll have his revenge; he'll tell everything he knows, and, I swear, Pem, he knows everything. . . . I'm done for!"

"Rot! You're off your head. You're excited. Can't you tell me exactly what happened?"

"No; I can't. I don't want to talk about it. I'm going to bed. You'll see what will happen to-morrow. I tell you, I'm done for!"

"How absurd! but please——"

"No—let me alone. I'm in no mood to explain it all to-night. I can't talk now. You'll see to-morrow."

Erroll flung himself into his bedroom and closed the door behind him. Supposing that night would bring counsel, Pembroke made no effort to follow

him. He sat for a while lost in thought, and then with a sigh turned to his work.

Doubtless Pembroke's estimate of the power of the night to calm excitement and control rashness would have proved correct, had Meath also slept upon his wrath. But Erroll's blow had enraged Macgregor as he had never been enraged before. He was not a coward, but as he grew older he had learned that discretion is the better part of valor when it comes to the point of clinching an argument with the fists. He had not taken part in a fight since his Third Form year, and he proposed never to take part in one again. It had never occurred to him that it would be possible to enrage Erroll to a degree beyond control. And he had been too angry himself in their final altercation, when he had stood at the door preventing George's exit, to heed the menace of Erroll's bloodshot eyes. Then had come the blinding blow, and it had frightened him and maddened him at the same instant. He had cursed in his rage, but at the same time he had reeled and shrunk from inviting another. Erroll was gone before he could fully pull himself together.

It is fortunate that no one heard the language in which he clothed his emotions in the next few moments. After striding wildly about for a short time, he stalked down the hall, rapped on the door of Dick West's room, and impetuously demanded that Polly Teal should come out and join him.

"What do you want?" asked Teal, as he stepped into the corridor.

"Close the door, you fool!" Macgregor exclaimed. "Come down to my room at once. I have something to say to you."

Polly quailed before the vigor of his friend's vocabulary as they went down the corridor together. "For gosh' sake!" he exclaimed, "you'll have Deering down on you."

"Curse Deering!" was Meath's reply. "I didn't ask you out for the benefit of your advice. I'm past control. That booby, that lily-livered fool——"

"What's the matter with your face?" Polly interrupted; "it's all red——"

"Don't ask insolent questions. Listen, will you? That fool——"

"Who—Erroll?"

"Yes—Erroll. What do you think he came to my room for?"

"I don't know. What?"

"To tell me that we couldn't be friends any longer, that I've had a rotten influence over him. Rotten influence! Why, he's a thief—he stole a Latin exam from old Roylston before I ever knew him; and he's stolen ever since. Only last week he took nearly a hundred dollars that belong to the Lit money he'd collected in New York, to pay his hotel bills with. And he comes up here to read me a moral lecture! It's the limit! I won't stand for it! What's more, when I began to point out some of his own short-comings, he got into a rage,

and before I knew what he was about, he'd smashed me in the face and skipped."

"Smashed you in the face!" exclaimed Teal. "Was there a fight?"

"How could there be a fight? Haven't I just told you that he ran as soon as he had hit me? I had no idea what was coming. I'm no fighter anyway; what sort of a chance would I have with a great hulking brute like him?"

"He isn't so big——"

"He's a darn sight bigger than I am. I don't fight like a mucker with my fists. But it's war now, I tell you. I'll run him out of here."

"If he's a thief," suggested Teal, "I suppose he will be run out."

"No, he won't be, for he's covered his tracks. He goes about whining and telling people his sins, the people he's lied to and stolen from. They think he's repentant and weep over him like the angels in the Bible. But I know what I've got to do. The school shall judge between us."

It was some time before Teal could piece together a coherent story from Meath's angry ejaculations, but gradually he got—not a correct version to be sure! but—one sufficiently approximate to that which Meath desired him to have.

At length he went off, speeded by his patron, to confide the news to as many as would listen. Polly's inability to keep an interesting bit of scandal to himself was only equaled by the entire absence of malice that characterized his gossip. He loved to

be the bearer of news, and, not unlike many others of his kind, he felt an added zest if the news were bad. He could scarcely wait until Macgregor gave the signal, so keen was he to spread the exciting story among his friends.

Meath had reckoned on Polly's propensity to gossip when he had summoned him from West's room. But he was not to content himself with that. Having crossed the Rubicon in his war upon Erroll's reputation, he determined to burn his bridges behind him.

He washed his face, arranged his dress, put on his spectacles, and started forth on his own account. Before the evening was over he had succeeded in getting his version of the quarrel before at least three different sets of fellows in as many rooms.

Had he heard Dick West's remark as he left his room, he would have paused in his haste to spread scandal. To a chorus of comments condemning Erroll, West interposed an objection.

"It's all very well to knock Erroll when we have heard only one side of the story. You'll probably find that Erroll has a good deal to say for himself, if he chooses to say it. Meath has been exaggerating in his own peculiar beastly way. For my part, I'd rather have such things said about me, true or false, than betray the confidence of a friend as Meath must have done to tell all this about Erroll."

By the time breakfast was over the next morning there was scarcely a boy in Deal School who had

not heard some version of the quarrel between Erroll and Meath. Macgregor was no longer widely popular in the school,—indeed not so well liked by his form as, in a quiet way, George had come to be—but he was prominent, and any incident in which he largely figured was bound to be a subject for general discussion.

As luck would have it George was late for breakfast. It was necessary for him to walk the entire length of the long room to his seat at the high table. As he came in the buzz of conversation suddenly ceased and the eyes of almost every boy in the room were upon him. He was painfully conscious, and estimated correctly the extent to which already he was the theme for gossip. He felt that he would never reach his place. He slipped into his seat, dropped his eyes, and began nervously to crumble into bits the piece of bread by his plate. A cup of coffee was passed him. He gulped it down, and then sat miserable and ill at ease until the boys began to leave and he could make his exit without attracting too much attention.

He hid himself in the library until the bell rang for morning chapel. On his way through the corridors and across the campus he was painfully aware that the boys avoided speaking to him; or, that if they greeted him, they did so in a constrained and distant manner. He did not realize that his own attitude of persistent preoccupation would have afforded little opportunity for casual greetings under the most normal circumstances.

His worst fears were confirmed as he left the Chapel, for he glanced at Snuffer Jennings, who had come out near him, and was about to speak when Snuffer turned away. If Snuffer—the mild and gentle Snuffer—cut him, he knew what to expect from the fellows generally. Unfortunately in his morbid sensitive state he forgot that Jennings was so near-sighted that he could not recognize a friend a dozen feet away. The same thing had happened frequently and George had never given a second thought, but in his present condition he immediately seized upon the incident as a sample of what he was continually to meet with. Accordingly, with head down and eyes fixed upon the ground, he dashed across the campus, giving no one the chance to stop him, not even hearing the score or more of "hellos" that were called to him. He ran up to his bedroom, locked himself in, and began feverishly to pack his bag.

Pembroke, in the meantime, seeing how matters were going, had been looking for his roommate everywhere. He had gone to their room, but not finding him in the study, had hurried on to seek him vainly in library and common rooms. He was due at a recitation then and had to abandon his search until recess.

Boys can be brutally thoughtless and even cruel in their relations with each other, but they could not have carried on spontaneously a systematic course of ostracism. Concerted effort, directed and enforced by their natural leaders, would have been

necessary to make a school too uncomfortable a place for a juvenile criminal. And of such effort, in Erroll's case, there had been none; indeed only a few of the fellows, who still took their cue from Meath, had any notion of deliberately cutting him.

Barton, the most influential boy in the school, by virtue of his steadiness, good sense and wise judgment, its natural and official head, was one of the last to hear the story of the quarrel and the subsequent accusations. He was told by Dick West and Donald Grafton, as he was coming into the Sixth Form common room at recess to read the papers. Both boys expressed considerably more indignation against Meath for his betrayal than they did against Erroll for his crimes. Barton assured them that Erroll's *Lit.* account was perfectly straight, and then set out to find George and learn the story at first hand.

On the way to Erroll's room he met Pembroke. "Where's George, Pem?" he asked.

"I don't know," Ned answered. "I have been looking all over the place for him ever since chapel. He isn't in the room. Have you heard all about the row?"

"More or less, but only this minute. Come into your room for a second, I want to talk with you. What's in it?—in this talk about Erroll being a thief?"

"It's all been beastly exaggerated. You know about the Lit. The only other thing of the kind that George has ever done was to swipe an exam

from old Roylston in Fourth Form year. He didn't take the slightest advantage of it, but owned up and the Gumshoe gave him another exam. George and Mac have been getting on the outs for some time. He went to break off last night, and darned square it was of him too—not to have sacked the beggar as he deserved! They had a row—mutual accusations, I guess. George lost his temper and smashed the little beast in the face, and I'm blamed glad he did. All this scandal to-day is just Meath trying to get back at him."

"I understand," said Barton. "But we've got to stop it, Pem. I'll settle the Lit story; if Mac says anything more about that, I'll stop him in a way he won't forget. Where the deuce do you suppose George is?"

"I don't know. He hiked off after prayers as though he had seen a ghost." He went to George's bedroom, opened the door, and glanced in. "He can't be in here, but I'll take a look." Some unusual disarrangement of the room attracted his attention, and he went in. The drawers of the bureau and the door of the closet were standing open. Pembroke saw at a glance that many of Erroll's clothes were gone. "By jove!" he exclaimed, "I believe he's cut out."

"Cut out?"

"It's like him in a way." Ned returned to the study, went over to Erroll's desk, and pulled open a drawer or so. "His checkbook and wallet are gone. I wonder—" He glanced about the room for

further confirmation of his suspicions. "Here's a letter!" he exclaimed, as suddenly his eyes caught sight of an envelope lying on his desk. "Wait a sec while I read it." He ripped it open, and read the hasty scrawl that George had written an hour before.

"Dear Pem: (it ran)

"It's all up. It's the same old story. I can't face the music. Meath has got me in too deep. I can't but realize what he is saying is true, and I have had several unpleasant samples this morning of how the fellows are going to take it. I've failed—that's all. I am going to get out for good. I'm going to New York this morning and I will write you soon from there. Forgive me for not seeing you before I left, but I couldn't do that. I'll never forget all you have been to me and done for me. Tell Deering I will write to him.

"GEORGE."

Pembroke read the note over twice. "I was right," he said. "He's cut out; gone to New York; says he couldn't stand it. What the deuce, Bart! I think I'll deal with Meath myself."

"No; take it easy. First thing is to get Erroll back, and we've got to get him back here to-day. I'll be hanged if I'll let it turn out this way. Don't bug things by having another row with Meath. Get Deering in here, will you? We'll find a way."

George had taken the ten o'clock train from Monday Port for New York, leaving the school unobserved while the majority of boys were at recita-

tions. Until he was settled in the train he had not been able to think connectedly of what he was doing—his motives and the possible results of his action.

Humiliation and shame, anger and excitement, followed by an almost sleepless night of mental torture, had been a little too much for his nerves. He had jumped to the conclusion during breakfast and chapel that his reputation was blasted and his school career was ruined. There seemed nothing but immediate ignominious flight. He determined to go to New York because he meant at once to see Laura. He must get something to do naturally, and he supposed to that end he must see his father. School was behind him forever, and he dismissed all idea of college as quite impossible. He regretted that he had not seen Pem, but he realized that Ned would have probably succeeded in keeping him at Deal, for a while anyway; and that was the one thing he was unwilling to do—face again the unspeakable unbearable humiliation of being publicly branded as a thief and cut by his companions. Pem would have stuck to him, he knew; but even Pem's loyalty could not compensate for the disgrace of exposure.

He had bought a newspaper at the station in Monday Port and tried to read, but the printed page conveyed no intelligence. So he sat staring out of the window at the bedraggled landscape of the flat coast country through which the train was rushing. It was good-bye to Deal, he thought bitterly, good-

bye to all the horrible weaknesses, mistakes and disappointments of youth. He told himself that a new world was opening before him, but somehow the prospect did not hold out very alluring possibilities. It was a world anyway, he consoled himself, in which he could begin anew, wherein there would be no closets from which the skeletons of past sins might stalk out at unexpected moments for his undoing. He tried to brace up and be glad that he had had the courage to get out at once, but he quite failed to feel otherwise than simply miserable and unhappy.

At last he was upon the ferryboat and New York was gleaming before him in the winter mist like a dream city, with wonderful towers and ramparts and spires veiled in shining gold. That is really the way New York looked that mild January day, but that is not the way George Erroll saw it. He was simply impatient for the ferryboat to tie up at her slip, impatient to see Laura, impatient for the balm of understanding sympathy.

He quite forgot that it was not in keeping with an almost penniless youth come to seek his fortune in a great city to hire a taxicab to drive him to his father's house, at least he did not realize this until he was almost there. Then he gave an annoyed exclamation, pounded suddenly on the window, and ordered the chauffeur to stop. He paid the man then and there and dismissed him, and walked along Fifth avenue the few blocks that remained of the distance in a fine little glow of self-approval. He

had telegraphed to his sister that he would arrive at two.

He found Laura waiting for him in the drawing-room of his father's house, as he had been sure he should. She looked well and bright and happy; as always, she was beautifully gowned; and appeared unaffectedly glad to see him. She was holding a telegram in her hand—his own, he supposed.

"Tell me what is the matter," she exclaimed, almost as soon as they had kissed each other. "I know that something has happened."

"Happened!" George cried. "Everything has happened. I'm ruined! the world has fallen about my ears. I'm disgraced. I have left school—left for good, you understand. They say I'm a knave. I'm done for, Laura, done for!"

Erroll had once told Pembroke that his sister had the tact of an angel, and, though he was not conscious that this was the quality she was drawing upon so largely at the moment, never perhaps had his estimate of her been so true. She stood quite still, looking at him with her calm beautiful blue eyes, marvelously hiding from him her bewilderment and anxiety.

"What is it, dearest, dearest boy?" she asked in a voice that fell upon his jangled nerves as music. "Tell me everything that has happened."

Erroll, who rarely lacked for words with which to describe his sensations and experiences, told her the story, but brokenly this time, helped on by frequent patient questions. She had taken hold of

his hand and kept it in hers almost continually, her eyes rarely leaving his face. Nothing that he said seemed to surprise or shock her. She was patiently, quietly trying to learn all, to understand all, for she knew how implicitly he trusted her, how wise and sure must be her ultimate advice.

"I don't know about the future," he concluded, "I haven't been able to see ahead. Perhaps it will be best to ask my father to help me get a position whereby I can earn my living. All I know is that I had to get away from Deal at once—come to you, darling. I know I'm a disappointment to you, unworthy of you; but you are really the only person in the world I can turn to now."

Her clasp upon his hand tightened as he stopped speaking, and she was silent for a moment. Then she released his hand and leaned back a little away from him.

"Dear, it is rather bad, isn't it?" she said at length. "But too, George, it isn't as bad as you are making it seem. There is one thing that you have quite forgotten—you must have forgotten, or you would not have left like this. You did everything you could to make things right—paid the penalty to those who had the right to punish you. Don't you see, don't you see, that by running away you are doing just what you say you are so tired of doing—refusing to stand the consequences? Oh, my dear, there is only one thing for you to do."

"Laura, you don't mean, you can't mean——?"

"Yes, yes," she interrupted, with a pathetic little

smile that went to his heart; "I do mean just that—you must go back and at once. Wait! don't object—let me finish. Do you think you could really escape by flight? Don't you see that by running away you confirm everybody in putting the worst construction on what you've done? You are what you say you won't be—a coward. You can fight it out; make good at school even yet. But, whether you make good or not, you must go back and die fighting."

"Laura, you——"

"Wait, dear, wait. Do you remember that memorial tablet to a soldier that we once saw in the Chapel of Clifton School, when Mudzie was thinking of placing you there? I copied it down, you know. And do you remember, too, Mr. Newbolt's beautiful poem about it, that I sent you a year or so ago? That seems to me to express exactly what I feel about your going back to Deal. In a sense I don't care how hard it may be or whether you make good there or not, if only you make good in your own eyes, if only you are one 'qui ante diem periit; sed miles.' Die fighting, dear heart, and I die with you. But if you are a coward and run away under fire, you run away from me."

George had sat quite still, thinking deeply, every word she uttered sinking into his conscience and his heart.

"Laura."

"Yes?"

"I can't."

"Ah, but you will."

"Tell me, would Mr. Deering, would Pem feel as you do? They know it all. I——"

"Ah! my dear, if they had known, they wouldn't have let you go away. I will read you a telegram that I received from Mr. Deering this morning, only an hour after yours. It has not influenced my advice, but it may help you to see that my advice would be his. It is this: 'George has left school under grave misapprehension of situation and his own duty. May I beg you to advise his immediate return? If he is unwilling to return to-day, I shall wish to come immediately. Anthony Deering.' George, Mr. Deering is one of your truest friends. Telegraph to him at once the hour you will arrive at Monday Port and ask him to meet you. He will put you in touch with the situation there."

"Yes, but tell me, did you answer that telegram?"

"I did, saying only this—'I have every reason to suppose George will return to school to-day.' You must go, dear; and at once. At first I had hoped you were coming now to see Father. Some day you will realize that he is your best friend. I want you to arrange to have Father bring me to Deal in June—for Prize Day."

"I should love to have you. But Prize Day—you would want to come then?"

"But yes," she answered with a smile, "to crown the victor."

He clasped her in his arms. "You're a dear," he murmured, kissing her. "I don't know what the dickens I should do without you."

He arrived at Monday Port at seven o'clock that evening, having telegraphed at Laura's request to Mr. Deering. The master was at the station to meet him. They sent out his bag to Deal by an expressman, as Deering proposed that they should walk.

It was a milder night than they had had for some time, with clear skies and bright stars shining, and unwontedly still. The long walk in the darkness through the quiet streets of the sleepy town, across the wide waste of beach between Deal water and the bay, and up the long hill to the School, was pleasant and grateful to Erroll after his wearying and exciting day.

"I was infinitely relieved, my boy," said Deering, as they walked along together, "to receive your telegram this afternoon. I think if I had not heard when I did that now I would be vainly seeking you in New York."

"I have been a great fool, Mr. Deering," said George lamely. "But that I realize it is due to Laura. She's a wonder; she made me see how cowardly and weak it was to run away."

"Fortunately you are back in time. Your absence to-day will soon be forgotten; perhaps has not been generally noticed. All you have to do for the present is to keep a stiff upper lip and not talk, and you will win out with the fellows. Indeed, I fancy you will not have half as hard a time as Meath."

"Poor Mac!" said Erroll. "Do you know, Mr. Deering, I am beginning to feel sorry for him myself."

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAST TERM

PUNISHMENTS are sometimes much easier to bear in reality than they are in anticipation; just as, on the other hand, certain consequences of our actions, at the time of temptation readily discounted, prove in the event most bitter and untoward. George Erroll and Macgregor Meath had ample opportunity for proving both parts of this generalization during their last term at Deal.

Erroll discovered, much to his surprise, that he was not to meet with the merited ostracism, though his private life was more fully known and more widely discussed than is often the case even in such a closely-knit community as a school. This was due in part to the fact that boys rarely hold impersonal grudges against their fellows, and in part to the fact that his best friends, Deering, Pembroke, and Barton, stood by him so splendidly during the crisis and after his return. Deering also explained the situation to Doctor Forester, who in turn, in a confidential conversation with his prefects, spoke words of wise counsel. "After all," he had remarked in conclusion, "George Erroll has already

done all in his power to atone for any wrong he committed; it is our parts now to help him forget."

In fact, after the first few difficult weeks of constraint, humiliating embarrassment, and looking for slights that did not come, Erroll entered upon what proved to be the happiest days of his school career; in which he could not help realizing, though he had not forgiven himself for all that he had said and done to Meath, that they were good and happy days largely because Macgregor had passed out of his life; and this seemed to justify the break, even if it did not excuse the manner in which the break had come.

He and Meath instinctively avoided each other and rarely met on occasions when there was any particular embarrassment in their doing so. Macgregor did not speak to him, nor did he invite greetings. The resentment of the school at the situation had been visited largely upon Meath. He was blamed much more for his betrayal than was Erroll for the deeds which he had blazoned abroad. Grafton and Meath had one brief uncomfortable interview the day Erroll was away from school, after which Donald deliberately cut his former leader; and the faithful Polly, always under the guidance of whomsoever for the moment was his best friend, followed suit. Watson and Ware sided with Erroll, and, though they did not go so far as to cut Meath, they gradually drifted away from association with him. Indeed, it seemed as though Erroll in large measure had taken Meath's old place among

the Insufferable Six; for it happened, now that the really discordant element had been eliminated, that the old set drew together again as their school days in that bright spring were drawing to a close. Grafton had rendered an act of belated justice by coming frankly to Erroll to express regret a few days after George's return from New York.

"I want to tell you, Erroll," he had said in his blunt halting way, "how darned sorry I am for having been the cause of a lot of this trouble for you. I had no idea what a mess might eventually grow out of my attitude toward you long ago, and I'll never forgive myself for letting Meath worm that story out of me."

"Thanks ever so much, Graf; but I don't blame you in the least for anything that's happened."

"Perhaps you don't, but I blame myself a lot. It would have been better for all of us if I had told you years ago what I knew. There was no sense in my being so blamed self-righteous. But what's done can't be undone. I'm sorry—that's all. I hope you will forgive me for being so beastly hard on you, and be good friends with me now." Which was a great deal for Grafton to say, as George realized and tremendously appreciated.

At Easter Erroll went to New York, and effected, to his own and Laura's great satisfaction, the long delayed reconciliation with his father. And then the spring term had come and was going all too quickly. If winter sometimes drags at Deal, spring breathes upon the place a brightness and beauty

that make the days too short for all that must be crowded into them and the nights too wonderful for prosaic unconscious sleep.

Erroll was not destined to realize the goal of his athletic ambitions by making the baseball team and getting into the Boxford game; for, though he practiced diligently, his mind had been so absorbed by more serious and important affairs and in an heroic effort to do himself credit in the school and college examinations at the end of the year, that his baseball suffered. He was an honorable substitute; but younger keener players eventually were crowned with the laurels of playing in the big game.

In the almost unclouded period of the spring term the brightest and best part of it all to Erroll was the deepening of his friendship with Ned Pembroke. It often seemed to him that all that he had longed and hoped for of that friendship had come true, and the even more blessed part of it was that there were the four years of college together to look forward to, for George had long since been weaned from his early preference for Harvard and had joined the great procession of Deal boys that marched year after year to Kingsbridge.

Only two things troubled him. One was that when the time came and the decision must be made, he did not succeed in doing what so many influences within and without impelled him to—he could not be confirmed. The ideals and aims of religion, as it was simply and sanely expounded at Deal, had come

"The brightest and best part of it all to Erroll was the deepening of his friendship with Ned Pembroke"

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

to mean much to him; and prayer had ceased to be a mere form of words or an occasional emotional appeal and had become an habitual practice by which he was training heart and will to conform to his ideals, but something held him back from what he conceived as a supreme surrender. Intellectually he was at once too keen and too ineffectively trained to work out his spiritual problems at that stage of his development; and so, though not without a struggle and a genuine feeling of disappointment, he decided against confirmation.

The other thing that cast a shadow even on the happiness of that last spring term was the thought of Macgregor Meath. Whatever Meath deserved, George felt that he was getting more than his share. Yet he could see little for Macgregor in the school, nor any way, on his part, to help him out.

One Saturday night late in May George was sitting by his study window, which was opened to a moonlight-flooded sea. Pembroke, it happened, was at Coventry with the baseball team playing Medford Academy, and would not be back before eleven.

The warm sea breeze was sweeping over him. The room was in semi-darkness; only a small desk lamp rested on the arm of his deep easy chair, the soft rays from which illuminated the text of Vergil but did not dim the glory of the night. George was growing increasingly sensitive to the almost unequaled beauty of the scene where wise fathers had fixed the site of Deal School. . . .

For a long time his eyes were fixed upon the

Latin text, which by now he could read with some facility without the aid of trot or assistant.

"Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris: . . ."

He appreciated the beauty of Vergil, and tasted with relish the flavor of "geminae Somni portae"; but Latin had so long been the stumbling-block of his school course, and the occasion, as it were, of his first temptation and fall, that it was with a sense of intense relief that he was finishing the Liber Sixtus of *The Æneid,* the allotted portion for admission to college, and was about to lay the book aside. At last it had been thoroughly and honestly read, and he could face the examination without unreasonable fear of failure.

"Ancora de prora iacitur; stant litore puppes."

He read the last line and closed the volume with a grateful sigh. He placed the lamp on the desk and turned off the light; then, leaning his head against the back of the chair, he gazed out upon the great sweep of sea, shimmering there beyond the dark lawns and irregular outline of cedars along the Whetstone cliffs, with a broad band of golden moonlight athwart the main. The warm south wind blew in refreshingly. . . .

The sea! He was consciously glad that so much of his life had been passed near the sea, however little commonly he had taken the trouble to remem-

ber or realize it. But there it had always been in the background, "unhasting, unresting," always splendidly there, to sink into his soul at such moments as these its beauty and mystery and peace. It was not often in the busy routine of school, in the constant companionship of a roommate who was also an intimate friend, that such hours, or even such moments, of quiet, rest and dreaming could be indulged. It was hard to realize that there were left but a few short weeks of Deal before he would be going off for the summer with his father and Laura—and would return no more. Now that it was slipping from him, he knew how deeply it all had been interwoven into his affections and his life, how always would be associated with the memory of it the thought of such tried and tested friendships as it seemed to him no boy had ever been blessed with. Pembroke, Deering, . . . there was comfort in every thought of them. And then a pang went through him—in his memories of school Macgregor Meath could never be forgotten, nor all that Meath had stood for, nor their miserable ending. . . .

Suddenly a gentle tap sounded upon his door and, as if in answer to his thoughts, at his summons Macgregor entered.

He looked about bewildered by the darkness, for the moment not discerning Erroll in the deep chair by the open window.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Anybody here?"

"Yes," George answered. "Who is it? Oh! how

are you, Macgregor? Come in." He half rose and reached out his hand to turn on the light.

"Don't turn on that beastly thing," Meath protested; "my rotten eyes have been going back on me lately—I'm grateful for the dark. May I come in?"

"Yes, do," said Erroll. "I'm glad you've come. Sit down."

For the moment Meath hesitated; then, with a gesture that was hidden from his companion but that would have been significant, he avoided the proffered chair and took his old perch on the couch, from where he too could look out upon the fields and the sea.

"Bully night, isn't it?" said George after an embarrassed pause.

"Wunderbar, wunderbar!" murmured Macgregor in reply. He had rested his chin upon his knees to get the better view, and George could see the moonlight glinting upon the lenses of his spectacles.

Again there was an awkward silence. Erroll tried to think of casual natural things to say, but for the moment his tongue was tied. He realized, however, that in his own good time Macgregor would unburden himself of his message.

"We shall miss it all before long," said George tentatively at length.

"Ah, no, no!" protested Meath quickly. "I shan't miss it, I shan't miss it." And then, with his usual aptness of quotation, he uttered a little sententiously

the last lines of *Lycidas,* which only that day they had finished in Stenton's Sixth English.

> "'And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
> And now was dropt into the western bay.
> At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
> To-morrow to fresh fields, and pastures new.'

"Them's my sentiments," he added. "Do you wonder?"

To this Erroll made no reply, and presently Meath went on. "No, you don't wonder, and you don't blame me. I say, George, do you mind my having come to-night?"

"No, Mac; of course I don't mind. Fact is, I was thinking of you when you knocked at the door. I've meant a hundred times this term to look you up. But to tell the truth, I haven't known what I would say if I did so."

"Ah!" exclaimed Macgregor with a sigh, "there's nothing to say, George, nothing to say. Let's not rake up the embers—there's no life left in 'em. I guess we both realize the situation pretty fully. We understand, and that's enough."

"But, Mac, there is something to say," George insisted. "And I would have found you sooner or later and said it. I'm so darned sorry for some of the things I blurted out that night, for what I did. I wasn't fair." Again he stopped, painfully self-conscious.

"No, George, old chap," rejoined Macgregor quickly, "don't you see, we can't talk it out, *can't?*

Fault on both sides doubtless; let it go at that. As for fairness! if we compare notes, where should I come out? Funny thing about it all is, darned rotten as the term has been for me, as I look back I seem to see one thing tumbling after another: I don't know where I could have begun to be different or where to have stopped. My blood was up—I was fighting for myself, and against anybody that got in my way. Guess I'd do it again, though I profess no pride nor plead hard luck. Fortunes of war, George, fortunes of war. I remind myself sometimes—often in fact—of Napoleon, as Lord Rosebery describes him in that jolly book I tried once to get you to read—The Last Phase, d'ye remember?—old and fat, lolling on a couch at Longwood in St. Helena, looking out upon that tiresome sea, keeping up the pretense to the end, and dreaming futilely of empire till the Devil came and gobbled him up. Let pass! . . . To tell the truth, I was blamed near skipping out after the catastrophe as you tried to do."

"But you didn't, as I did," said George a little bitterly.

"No—and that's me one poor comfort in it all," replied Macgregor. "I stuck it out—I will stick it out till the bell tolls for the last chapel and recitation. I'll take my diploma, make my bow, receive the good Bishop's blessin', and then—thank the Lord!—pass on. . . . Perhaps I have learned a thing or two on 'the good old hill', perhaps I haven't; but that's neither here nor there. But I

didn't come, as I've already protested, to rake up the past. Though I'd a purpose in coming, as you say I always have. It's this: Rotten as I have been to you, rotten as you so probably rightly believe I've been for you, through it all, Georgie dear, I've liked you,—and I like you still. I haven't come to make it up, to say that in spite of all that's happened I hope we can still be friends; for I don't, as a matter of fact, think we could be if we were fools enough to try; but just to tell you this—with all your faults, old boy, I love you still."

For a moment or so Erroll was at loss for a reply. "Thank you, Mac," he said at last quite simply. "I shall be glad to feel that. I always liked you till the end, and I will always be grateful to you for all that you did for me. In time, I hope, both of us will remember only the good times we've had together. Whatever happens in the future and whether or not we're ever thrown together again, I'll always be glad we've had this talk to-night. It will help a lot to do away with hard feeling."

"I hope so," Macgregor answered. He rose from the couch and stretched his arms—an old familiar gesture.

"Don't go," George protested.

"I must. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mac, thank you for coming."

Meath made no reply, but slipped almost noiselessly from the room, closing the door softly behind him.

Erroll was not again to meet him on intimate

terms. He made several efforts to do so, but Meath cleverly eluded them, and in the rush of things at term end there was less and less time or opportunity to do more.

Prize Day was upon them all too soon, and the school had taken on that gala aspect, worn only on such occasions, that give parents and aunts and cousins and occasional stray sweethearts the impression that school life is a continual fête. Mr. Erroll came for the day and brought Laura; and in the light of Laura's beautiful eyes both George and Pem, for slightly different reasons, were radiant. Flags were fluttering, flowers blooming, and sunshine was a-riot over playing fields and sea. The exercises were held in the gymnasium, diplomas awarded, and prizes taken, one or two by Pembroke, and, to his intense embarrassment and surprised delight, one was awarded to Erroll—a neat little vellum-bound copy of Vergil's *Bucolics,* which had been offered by Mr. Roylston for the best rendering of an Eclogue into English verse.

And then the fathers and mothers and the girls were gone, and the boys of the lower school followed promptly after them, and the Sixth breathed hard for a week while it took college examinations. And then came the last good-byes, boys and boys, boys and masters. They were hard to say often, for love of school at the last is keen and deep. But for the boys there are home and vacation and college ahead where the old friendships were often to go on.

Erroll and Pembroke went off together, sad at the leaving, but not unhappy.

"Good-bye, Mr. Deering, you've been a wonderful friend to me."

"Good-bye, George. God bless you. You'll be coming down often from Kingsbridge next year."

"Of course I shall. Good-bye, sir; I shall never forget you."

And then the taxis had come, and the boys were piling in, and the last cheer was given, and another Sixth had rolled out from the walls of Deal into the world of college, into the world of life, leaving boyhood and school behind them, with a pang and a sigh perhaps, but with hearts already dreaming of the future. . . .

Deering turned away and strolled off toward the eastern terrace. His heart was full, his lips were trembling a little beyond his control. It had not seemed it could mean so much to him,—Erroll's leaving. . . .

He had cared so much more for him than he had realized, than the boy knew, than he or anyone would ever know . . . . Well, well, he supposed he had helped him through some hard times, that George knew and cared, and that was all he could expect, all he ought to desire. . . . But this was life! . . . He wondered idly if anyone had ever minded his going away so much. Jimmie Lawrence? . . . dear old Jim! . . . Reggie Carroll? . . . How hard the leaving college had been! . . .

Bill Morris in the old days at Deal? . . . Ah! these separations, disappointments, hopes. . . . Life, life! . . .

As he reached the terrace that overlooks the bay and Neck past Cormorant to the Light of Deigr, it was with a thrill of relief and joy that he found Morris there, smoking, dreaming alone in the soft still evening. He filled his pipe from Morris' pouch and lighted it. Then he drew up a chair and sat down by his side. . . . It was cool and pleasant there, grateful after the long warm fatiguing day of excitement. The stars were shining in a deep clear sky, a soft west wind was barely blowing, stirring the leaves of the honeysuckle vines ever so gently and shaking out their fragrance on the night. Across the bay Deigr Light was faithfully blinking red and white as of yore. . . .

THE END

THE following pages contain advertisements of Macmillan books by the same author and other juvenile books.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Deering at Princeton

Decorated Cloth, Ill., 12mo, $1.35 net

"The book gives a series of graphic pictures of undergraduate life at old Nassau, with a fine young Southerner as the hero."—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

"The book is an exceedingly pleasant one, of a good tone without being in the least priggish."—*N. Y. Herald.*

"The story is written carefully and seriously, obviously by one well acquainted with Princeton customs and anxious to set before the reader the various influences that mold the college man."—*Chicago Tribune.*

"Deering is a good, clean type of American who lands the captaincy of the Orange and Black football team. . . . A nice, wholesome book."—*N. Y. American.*

" . . . will take rank among the reliable narratives of American college life."—*Newark Evening News.*

" . . . an admirable story of its kind, head and shoulders above the average."—*Providence Journal.*

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

By THE SAME AUTHOR

Deering of Deal

Decorated Cloth, Illustrated, 12mo, $1.25 net; postpaid $1.38

"A fine manliness is the code on the whole, and the boys make interesting portraits. There are thrilling ball games, wonderful feats of swimming, adventurous visits to delightful pirate caves in the woods, with all the joys of cryptic cooking. There is hazing cleverly met and cruelty signally punished. . . . . Tony Deering and his little knot of friends are good and pleasant company."—*The Nation.*

"The tale of how this boy lived and what happened to him must interest all boys, as well as many girls and grown-up people."—*Boston Herald.*

"Here is a good, healthy story, with a manly spirit about it. The athletic boy will like it, for it deals with a hero of the sports—but others will like it also for its general tone and principle."—*Louisville Post.*

"This is a particularly strong and worth-while story of preparatory school life, the boyish friendships, studies, and adventures, and it all leads, through the way of frolic and work, to a finer manliness than when they first came together."—*Chicago Tribune.*

". . . brings out very well the spirit, manliness and loyalty that make a successful school."—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

"An excellent school story."—*Philadelphia Public Ledger.*

"The author assuredly understands boy nature, and the story should be very popular."—*The Living Age.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers **64-66 FIFTH AVENUE** **New York**

NEW BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Hoof and Claw

By CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, Author of "Kings in Exile," "Neighbors Unknown," etc. With illustrations by Paul Bransom. Decorated cloth, 12mo. $1.35 net.

"Under the faithful guidance of Mr. Roberts," the editor of the *London Athenaeum* once wrote, "we have ventured among the wild beasts of land and sea; and we hope to do so many times in the future. It is an education not to be missed by those who have the chance, and the chance is everyone's." *Hoof and Claw* is another of those books for which Mr. Roberts is so justly famous, a book much like the one referred to in the preceding sentences. In it are told more than a dozen stories of animals. Mr. Roberts writes with an understanding of the nature of the creatures of field and forest that is nothing short of marvelous, an appreciation of the wild life that has seldom if ever found its equal in literature. Among the titles of the tales in his latest collection are *The Bear That Thought He Was a Dog, The Trail of the Vanishing Herds, The Cabin Door, A Basket of Fish, The Fisher in the Chutes, The Runner of the High Peaks* and *Up a Tree.*

Stories from Northern Myths

By EMILIE KIP BAKER, Author of "Stories of Old Greece and Rome." New, revised and enlarged edition of "Out of the Northland." Illustrated. Decorated cloth, 12mo. $1.50 net.

A book which has grown in the estimate of readers is here presented in a new edition. In *Stories from Northern Myths* Mrs. Baker presents tales of the Norse gods and of Siegmund and Siegfried. This edition has been taken from old versions, many of which have not, up to this time, been published. Stories that possess a greater interest for children cannot be found. They are told in a pleasing manner and attractive style, characteristic of the author's other well known publications.

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

Altsheler. The Horsemen of the Plains

By JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER

"A story of the West, of Indians, of scouts, trappers, fur traders and, in short, of everything that is dear to the imagination of a healthy American boy."—*New York Sun.*

Bacon. While Caroline Was Growing

By JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

"Only a genuine lover of children, and a keenly sympathetic observer of human nature, could have given us a book like this."—*Boston Herald.*

Carroll. Alice's Adventures and Through the Looking Glass

By LEWIS CARROLL

"One of the immortal books for children."

Dix. A Little Captive Lad

By MARIE BEULAH DIX

"The human interest is strong and children are sure to like it."—*Washington Times.*

Greene. Pickett's Gap

By HOMER GREENE

"The story presents a picture of truth and honor that cannot fail to have a vivid impression upon the reader."—*Toledo Blade.*

This collection of juvenile books contains works of standard quality, on a variety of subjects—history, biography, fiction, science and poetry—carefully chosen to meet the needs and interests of both boys and girls.

Each volume, Cloth, 12mo. 50 cents net. Postage extra.

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

THE MACMILLAN JUVENILE LIBRARY

Each Volume Cloth, 12mo, 50 cents net

Mabie. The Book of Christmas

By H. W. MABIE

"A beautiful collection of Christmas verse and prose in which all the old favorites will be found in an artistic setting."—*The St. Louis Mirror.*

Nesbit. The Railway Children

By E. NESBIT

"A delightful story, revealing the author's intimate knowledge of juvenile ways."—*The Nation.*

Whyte. The Story Book Girls

By CHRISTINA WHYTE

"A sweet, wholesome girl's book, full of fun, yet with an underlying earnestness that is part of its charm."

Wright. Dream Fox Story Book

By MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT

"The whole book is delicious with its wise and kindly humor, its just perspective of the true value of things."

Wright. Aunt Jimmy's Will

By MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT

"Barbara has written no more delightful book than this. Every child will love it."

Lucas. Slowcoach

By E. V. LUCAS

"The record of an English family's coaching tour in a great old-fashioned wagon. A charming narrative, as quaint and original as its name."—*Booknews Monthly.*

Major. Uncle Tom Andy Bill

By CHARLES MAJOR

"A stirring story full of bears, Indians and hidden treasures."—*Cleveland Leader.*

Major. The Bears of Blue River

By CHARLES MAJOR

"A little boy of pioneer days has many exciting adventures, which will please all real boys."

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York